Rime of the Ancient Castellammaresi

An in-depth exploration of the Bonanno Family's Asaro clan & other crucial nodes in the historic Trapanese network

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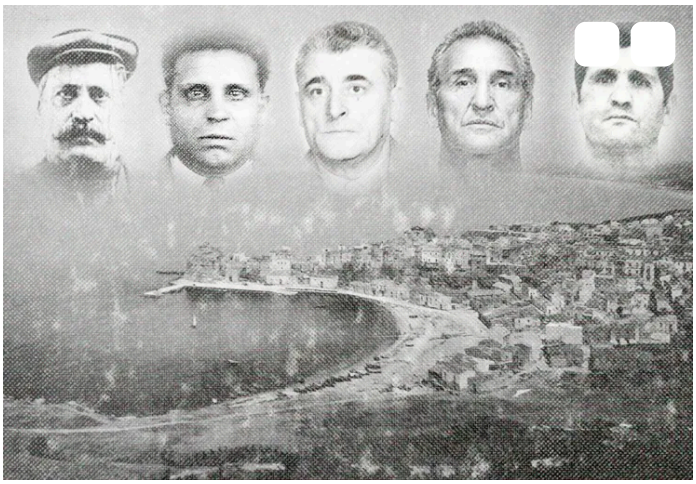


The Asaros have been involved with New York City's Bonanno Family for five generations of straight father-son succession and bridge a gap between the 19th century mafia in Castellammare del Golfo and the present day Bonannos. There may be comparable examples in organizations like the Gambino or DeCavalcante Families, though I'm not aware of confirmed examples that represent direct, unbroken mafia lineage lasting this long within the United States.

Through intermarriage and the inclusion of cousins and in-laws in mafia activities over multiple generations, the Asaros are a mafia "clan" in every sense of the word both then and now. In addition to New York and Castellammare del Golfo, the Asaros also connect to Boston and Montreal. The Asaro clan has produced relatives in leadership positions through most known eras of the Bonanno Family, too, and there is reason to speculate that this stature dates back to Castellammare.

Through tracing the Asaros' roots and relationships, we can learn a great deal about the historic mafia landscape in Trapani beyond the Asaros alone. The first half of this article delves into other early Castellammarese mafia figures who operated alongside the Asaros and offers exclusive insight into influential names from the 19th century Sicilian mafia in Castellammare and other areas

of Trapani province. Some of these names also connect to other American locations, including Detroit, and this article takes several tangential detours to explore these adjacent connections as they all map out the interconnected and expansive nature of the Cosa Nostra phenomenon. The second half of the article also provides a thorough examination of later Asaro descendants and their activities in New York, this “story” bookended by the names Girolamo and its variant Jerome.

The 1896 Giuseppe Costa Murder

Bonanno member Vincent "Vinny" Asaro was a fixture in the same mob environment that produced John Gotti, the two of them frequently mingling in the neighborhoods surrounding East New York and Ozone Park. Asaro was also close friends with household names from this area like Paul Vario and Jimmy Burke. Asaro was unique in Ozone Park for his mafia lineage, however. Much as he inducted his son into the Bonanno Family, Vinny's father and grandfather were confirmed Bonanno members but this line goes back at least one more generation.

Vinny's great-grandfather Girolamo Asaro (b. 1857) was charged and convicted of ordering the 1896 murder of Giuseppe Costa in Castellammare del Golfo before coming to New York City. Already a fugitive at the time of his 1898 trial, Asaro was nonetheless convicted of directing Martino Buccellato to kill Costa. Other men alleged by Italian investigators to be involved in the Costa murder with Asaro and Buccellato were Giuseppe Bonanno, Stefano Ingoglia, Antonino Tagliavia, Salvatore Buccellato, and brothers Vito and Vincenzo Giallo. Further investigation revealed them to be part of an "association", described as "a society unto themselves.” The investigation also targeted these men and others for various crimes committed by the "association".

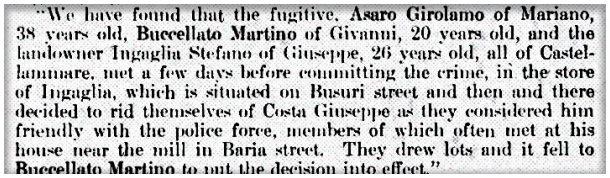
Girolamo Asaro was Vinny Asaro’s great-grandfather.

Murder victim Giuseppe Costa was also from Castellammare del Golfo and in his mid-thirties. He was the guard of a property bordering an estate owned by

"association" leader Giuseppe Ingoglia in the rural Balata di Baida district west of Castellammare and investigators determined that Costa's murder had been premeditated, as evidenced by at least two meetings where the conspiracy was discussed. Costa was said to be of "upright character" and friendly with police.

The roots of the murder stemmed from Costa cutting vines at a vineyard belonging to Ingoglia, this property neighboring the estate Costa was responsible for guarding. Costa also reportedly allowed cheese to be stolen from Ingoglia's son Stefano and alleged that another "association" member, Salvatore Buccellato, had stolen a dog from the property Costa guarded. Additionally, member Pietro Rondello was accused by Costa of stealing sheep. Rondello demanded Costa meet with leader Giuseppe Ingoglia to rescind the allegation but Costa refused. Costa intervened in other crimes being committed by the "association" as well and invited police to socialize in his home.

Investigators stated that the conspirators, which included "leading members" of the “association”, had met at Ingoglia's home and the group determined Costa was a potential informant. An additional meeting was held between Asaro, Martino Buccellato, and Stefano Ingoglia at Ingoglia's store where specifics of the murder were planned. At one meeting, the attendees allegedly "drew lots" to determine who would commit the murder and it fell on the young Buccellato. However, the investigation also noted that Martino Buccellato was chosen for the murder because of his "brutal and bloody insticts" as well as a need to "prove himself worthy” of “membership" in the "criminal society". Barely over the age of twenty, Buccellato was significantly younger than most of the other conspirators and “association” members, which supports the investigators' conclusion that he was “making his bones,” to use modern parlance.


"We have found that the fugitive, **Asaro Girolamo of Mariano,** 38 years old, **Buccellato Martino** of Givanni, 20 years old, and the landowner Ingaglia Stefano of Giuseppe, 26 years old, all of Castellammare, met a few days before committing the crime, in the store of Ingaglia, which is situated on Busuri street and then and there decided to rid themselves of Costa Giuseppe as they considered him friendly with the police force, members of which often met at his house near the mill in Baria street. They drew lots and it fell to Buccellato Martino to put the decision into effect."

Asaro conspired with Martino Buccellato to kill Costa.

Following the second meeting at Ingoglia's store, Buccellato practiced shooting on the Ingoglias' estate and the Giallo brothers ostensibly carried out loud maintenance work on a mill tank in an attempt to lure Giuseppe Costa toward the location, though this plan failed. Costa's wife begged him not to leave their residence, suspecting he may be murdered. In the days

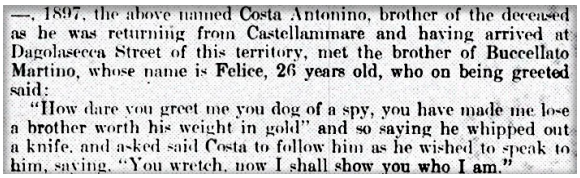
leading up to the murder, the Costas discovered someone put excrement on their own water tank and Costa knew who was responsible but did nothing as he already sensed danger. A threatening letter had also been found in front of Costa's home telling him to cease his opposition to the Ingoglia group's activities and referenced the Salvatore Buccellato dog theft; the letter was found with a knife belonging to one of the Giallo brothers.

On the day of the actual murder, Martino Buccellato went into town to establish an alibi, then hurried back to where Costa was located. Witnesses, including Giuseppe Costa's brother, saw Buccellato heading toward the site of the murder with a shotgun. Costa's brother also saw the Giallo brothers in the area, themselves described as members of the "association". After hiding out near the scene of the impending attack, Buccellato used a shotgun to ambush Giuseppe Costa in front of a mill and Costa died instantly via buckshot to the heart. Costa's body was found in the mill and the arrangement of his body suggests a degree of ritualism: he was laid on a mattress with his arms "half-folded" and his right arm across his chest, though it is not stated whether his killers or those who discovered him moved his body. Either way, it was not the police. Investigators reported that Stefano Ingoglia was also at the scene of the crime and pretended to kiss Costa's corpse following the murder.

While the conspiracy involved multiple leading members of the "association", the investigation suggested that Girolamo Asaro personally oversaw the murder plot. In addition to his attending a meeting with Stefano Ingoglia and gunman Martino Buccellato where the plot was finalized, Asaro owned property near the site of the murder and also had a brother-in-law in the area. Asaro was described as an ex-convict said to hold "conclaves" with his "gang" and plan crimes at the aforementioned property. Both Girolamo Asaro and Martino Buccellato became fugitives following the murder and despite his young age, Buccellato was described by Italian authorities as deceased by 1908, indicating foul play.

Following the murder, Costa's relatives were terrified and refused to cooperate with law enforcement. On one occasion nearly a year after the murder, Antonino Costa, the brother of the victim, ran into shooter Martino Buccellato's 26-year-old older brother Felice and greeted him. Felice Buccellato however called Costa's brother a "dog of a spy" and expressed outrage over the loss of his own brother, Martino, who was "worth his weight in gold." Buccellato brandished a knife and threatened Antonino Costa but it was broken up by a bystander, Felice Buccellato promising future harm to Costa. It's not clear if Martino Buccellato was already deceased by this time or

if his brother was referring to Martino's fugitive status but Felice Buccellato was subsequently charged for his threats toward Antonino Costa.


—, 1897, the above named Costa Antonino, brother of the deceased as he was returning from Castellammare and having arrived at Dagolasecca Street of this territory, met the brother of Buccellato Martino, whose name is Felice, 26 years old, who on being greeted said:
"How dare you greet me you dog of a spy, you have made me lose a brother worth his weight in gold" and so saying he whipped out a knife, and asked said Costa to follow him as he wished to speak to him, saying, "You wretch, now I shall show you who I am."

Felice Buccellato confronted Costa's brother.

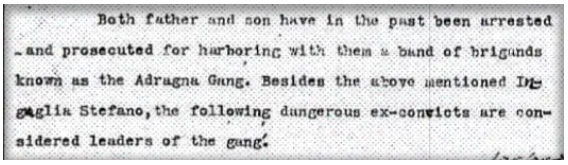
Martino Buccellato's brother Felice was in fact the same Felice Buccellato described by Joe Bonanno in his memoir *A Man of Honor*, which includes a segment on the bloody war between Bonanno's older relatives and the Buccellato clan as the two groups vied for power in Castellammare during the late 1800s and early 1900s and again in the mid-to-late 1910s. Felice served as the infant Bonanno's baptismal godfather in early 1905 to symbolize peace between the two clans and it is believed that Buccellato eventually became boss of Castellammare del Golfo prior to his own murder in 1921. Martino and Felice's father Giovanni was the same Giovanni Buccellato identified as an "association" member during the Costa murder investigation and author Dr. James Buccellato, a direct descendant of "association" member Salvatore, Giovanni's brother, confirmed that Martino's brother Felice was indeed the same one described by Bonanno. As the elder brother of the newly-recruited Martino and the respective son and nephew of "association" members Giovanni and Salvatore Buccellato, Felice was presumably already a member of the organization himself at this time.

Given the consistency of mafia formalities over generations, investigations in Palermo and Agrigento between the 1870s and 1890s revealing that the Sicilian mafia utilized similar rules and structure to modern Cosa Nostra, plus references to Asaro being a "member" of the "association", we can deduce that Girolamo Asaro was at least a made member of the Castellammare Family and may have been Buccellato's sponsor or direct superior if the account is true that young Buccellato proved himself worthy of membership under Asaro's supervision. The references to Asaro plotting other crimes with his "gang" and his close collaboration with the Family's top leadership, including the Ingoglias, could suggest Asaro was in a leadership position within the "association", too. Other information that will be mentioned later adds weight to the idea that Asaro held a significant position in the Castellammarese mafia and later New York City for a brief time.

"A Society Unto Themselves"

As noted, the investigation into the Giuseppe Costa murder revealed that the perpetrators were part of an "association" or "gang" who "constitute a society unto themselves" comprised of "criminals and relatives of criminals," and that this association did not follow the law nor did it cooperate with law enforcement officers. The leader of this group in Castellammare, Giuseppe Ingoglia, fifty-years-old, had delegated leadership to his son Stefano but it appears Giuseppe remained the official leader and Stefano simply stood in for his father. Both father and son were described during the investigation as ex-convicts who had become "rich", owning a rural property adjacent to the estate guarded by Costa, as outlined in the previous section.

In addition to leading this "association", the elder Ingoglia was said to have once led a group of bandits. Giuseppe and his son Stefano had also been charged previously with harboring the so-called "Adragna Gang". Adragna is a name occasionally found in Castellammare del Golfo but Adragna was notably the surname of a mafia family from neighboring Alcamo who later moved to the United States, including suspected Bonanno member Giuseppe Adragna of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and his five sons, some of whom joined the Pittsburgh and San Jose Families and one who was identified as a member in New York. A previous investigation revealed that Giuseppe Ingoglia had indeed hidden a group of bandits out on his estate in the Baida district of Castellammare in 1888 following an incident in Alcamo and the leader of this group was named Salvatore Adragna.


Both father and son have in the past been arrested and prosecuted for harboring with them a band of brigands known as the Adragna Gang. Besides the above mentioned Ingoglia Stefano, the following dangerous ex-convicts are considered leaders of the gang.

The Ingoglias assisted the “Adragna gang”.

Salvatore Adragna and a group of five other brigands were alleged participants in the failed kidnapping of *il Cavaliere* Vincenzo Zalapi at Zalapi’s farmstead outside of historic Alcamo in September 1888, resulting in the murder of Zalapi’s son Gaetano and the property’s *campiere*, Gaspare LoMonaco. Zalapi was the former mayor of Piana dei Greci and along with his father and brother he was a key supporter of Giuseppe Garibaldi during the Unification of Italy in the early 1860s. Rising in status after the revolution, Vincenzo Zalapi acquired the Masseria Scalilla south of Alcamo where the attack eventually took place.

Zalapi was confronted by a group of approximately six men, including Salvatore Adragna, while walking the Scalilla property. The bandit group attempted to corral Vincenzo and his family near the front of their home but a confrontation ensued resulting in Gaetano Zalapi’s murder and several others

being wounded by gunfire, including Vincenzo Zalapi and his wife. According to popular accounts of the story, the assailants initially asked for 100,000 lire but Zalapi said he was unable to accommodate that sum and the brigands rejected his counteroffer, at which point Zalapi spoke in the *Arbëresh* tongue instructing his family to run inside their nearby home, prompting the brigands to open fire. Gaetano was killed while his family attempted to pull him indoors but the door to the building wouldn't close properly and he was unable to escape the barrage of gunfire.

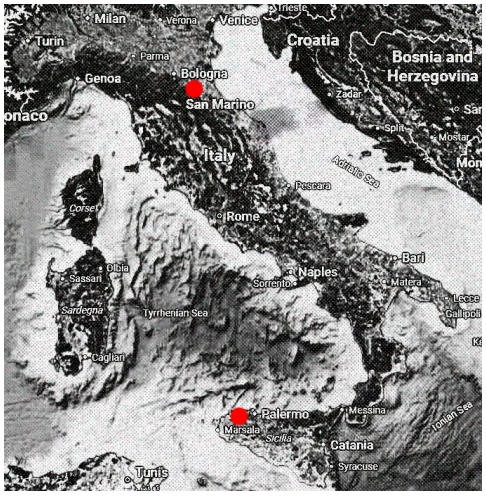
The armed Scalilla *campiere* (field guard), LoMonaco, was hiding in a nearby building and fired at the brigands but was shot in the head and died during the firefight. The farm's *soprastante* (overseer) Gioacchino DiMaggio was wounded but police determined that DiMaggio's son Giuseppe colluded with the brigands in the kidnapping plot and Giuseppe DiMaggio was subsequently arrested. The murdered Gaspare LoMonaco was born in Alcamo while the DiMaggios were originally from Piana dei Greci like the Zalapis before moving to Alcamo.

Murderous bandits attacked the Zalapis at the Masseria Scalilla (pictured).

Following the shooting, the culprits fled the Scalilla estate and five of them were offered "hospitality" by Giuseppe Ingoglia on his Baida property in Castellammare. An unspecified brother of Ingoglia also reportedly assisted the fugitives. The group was confronted by police at Ingoglia's estate around two weeks after the Zalapi incident though a chase ensued and most of the men escaped, Pietro Federicone being the only fugitive arrested. Another one of the alleged conspirators, Vincenzo Galatioto, was found murdered near the mountains outside of Castellammare del Golfo just over a week later. Galatioto was originally from Castellammare but lived as a fugitive in Monte San Giuliano, Galatioto having been accused of previous theft and assault charges. Investigators believed Galatioto directed the brigands to carry out the attempted Zalapi kidnapping.

Several months later, in January 1889, another clash between police and the "Adragna Gang" occurred in Vita where 250 armed officers engaged in a standoff with Salvatore Adragna, resulting in the death of a *Carabiniere* officer but also the arrests of Adragna and his accomplices. The fugitives gave themselves up to the *Carabiniere* captain by offering to give him their weapons, telling him they could not swear on their own honor given they were all accused murderers but would instead swear on the honor of their families not to deceive the captain. Indeed, the remaining members of the Adragna group willingly forfeited their weapons and allowed themselves to be taken into custody by the *Carabinieri*.

Though the Zalapi incident occurred in Alcamo, where the Adragnas of the American mafia came from, Salvatore Adragna was actually from Vita, the Trapani *comune* where he was ultimately arrested in 1889 after having been a fugitive since 1882. Adragna's accomplices included Antonino Cascio of Salaparuta, Calogero Caltagirone of Alcamo, and Rinaldo Brunetti of Forli in Northern Italy. Caltagirone and Brunetti had both escaped from a prison in Brindisi which may be how Brunetti was recruited into this otherwise Trapanese fold but Pietro Federicone, who was arrested at Giuseppe Ingoglia's property over two months earlier, was also from Forli and had escaped from a prison in Turin. Caltagirone was also a fugitive after escaping prison in Sciacca, Agrigento. All of the men, including Adragna, had been charged for previous murders or attempted murders.



Criminals from Forli (top) made their way to Alcamo (bottom)

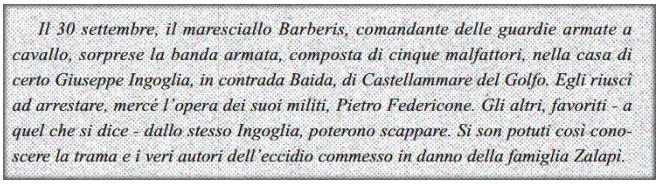
The two men from Forli likely became connected to the Adragna group through the broad criminal networks that unfolded within the Italian prison system but it's remarkable that they ended up in Trapani and collaborated with local Sicilians in a major crime then received assistance from a future mafia boss in the aftermath. Though Sicilian mafiosi did form relationships

with criminals from other Italian regions during incarceration, it was not typical to see them operate together in western Sicily and the Castellammaresi in particular were notably clannish even later on in the pan-Italian New York mafia, there being drastically fewer non-Sicilian members made into the Bonanno Family prior to the 1950s in comparison to the more liberal recruitment practices of the Genovese, Gambino, and Lucchese groups that began decades earlier. Joe Bonanno's memoir touches on favorable relationships the Castellammarese boss had with non-Sicilian mafia leaders in New York and larger numbers of what he termed "Americanized" members were eventually made into his Family toward the end of Bonanno's reign but he was highly critical of the inclusion of mainlanders in his otherwise Sicilian "Tradition".

Exactly how these particular fugitives convened in Trapani and opted into the plot against Vincenzo Zalapi is a mystery but Giuseppe Ingoglia providing assistance to criminals from other parts of Trapani and even Northern Italy after the bloody Zalapi incident in Alcamo demonstrates that he was already a well-connected regional underworld figure the decade prior to his identification as the Castellammare mafia leader in 1896. A question is why Giuseppe Ingoglia offered to help the "Adragna Gang", especially to the extent of housing them at his home property when hundreds of *Carabinieri* were combing the Trapani countryside in pursuit of the murderous band. Municipal records show Ingoglia was born into a landowning upper class Castellammarese family and on the surface had little in common with thuggish bandits yet he felt some obligation to assist a seemingly random collection of escaped convicts who had just killed two people, including the son of a knight, during a brutish ransom attempt.

There is no evidence that Salvatore Adragna or his band of brigands were formal mafiosi but Adragna's relationship to Ingoglia confirms the group was connected to the mafia network and their hometowns of Vita, Alcamo, and Salaparuta did have their own mafia branches. Vita produced a significant faction of Newark Family members who intersected with the Bonanno and Lucchese Families and Alcamo produced dozens of American mafiosi, some of them New York Bonanno members, but a larger concentration ended up in Detroit and California. The powerful DeSimones of Colorado and then Los Angeles were from Salaparuta and closely connected to early Bonanno *rappresentante* Nicolo Schiro from Roccamena and Camporeale, the DeSimones descending from a Salatino clan that also produced Dallas boss Joe Civello and other relatives.

Coverage of the 1888-89 Salvatore Adragna episode stated that he was previously known to associate with an earlier Castellammarese mafia leader from 1883, the former bandit Francesco Plescia, who will be elaborated on in detail later. Though Adragna and his associates were dubbed the “Adragna Gang”, authorities made multiple references to the group having received direction from Vincenzo Galatioto, the Castellammarese conspirator found murdered a short time after the failed kidnapping, further suggesting the Castellammaresi played an influential role over this mixed crew of Trapanese and Northern Italian brigands. The true dynamics behind these criminal relationships are unknown but at least two Castellammarese figures were directly invested in Adragna’s activities surrounding the botched Zalapi kidnapping and the investigation connected Adragna to two men who were identified in the 1880s and ‘90s as Castellammarese mafia leaders.



Il 30 settembre, il maresciallo Barberis, comandante delle guardie armate a cavallo, sorprese la banda armata, composta di cinque malfattori, nella casa di certo Giuseppe Ingoglia, in contrada Baida, di Castellammare del Golfo. Egli riuscì ad arrestare, mercè l'opera dei suoi militi, Pietro Federicone. Gli altri, favoriti - a quel che si dice - dallo stesso Ingoglia, poterono scappare. Si son potuti così conoscere la trama e i veri autori dell'eccidio commesso in danno della famiglia Zalapi.

Ingoglia’s Baida property housed fugitives from the Zalapi case.

The Ingoglia-led "association" in 1896 was said to operate on “Baria” Street in Castellammare. Certain street names have changed since the 19th century but this could be Via Bari, a short road on the edge of town that directly borders the mountains behind Castellammare, though it may also refer to the Baida district where the Ingoglias and other Castellammarese mafiosi lived. In either case, the local organization operated on the west side of Castellammare in close proximity to the municipality’s rural hillscape and was particularly active in the mountains themselves. The Balata di Baida area was named for a historic castle near the foot of Mount Sparagio and was once a *frazione* of Monte San Giuliano, then becoming a *frazione* of Castellammare after 1846, the same year Giuseppe Ingoglia was born.

Former Bonanno associate Francesco “Frank” Fiordilino, a native of Castellammare del Golfo, has said the local mafia had a strong presence in the hills, describing this element of the local Family as the “mountain people” and specifically named the Asaro and Buccellato clans as a product of “the mountain”. Fiordillino also stated that his uncle, future Bonanno member Francesco Navarra, once hid from authorities in Balata di Baida during the 1950s. Giuseppe Costa was said to have been killed in proximity to “Bada”, another likely reference to “Baida” given Costa was guarding an estate bordering the Ingoglias’ property. Regardless of the specific locations referenced in the case, the group committed "continual crimes" and

"terrorized" the less-frequented streets in the area. The “association” was said to have gone unpunished for their crimes, victims fearing severe repercussions should they denounce the perpetrators.

Ingoglia’s group operated west of Castellammare.

Some of the “leaders” of this "association" or "gang", described as ex-convicts, circa mid-1890s, were listed as follows in one English translation of the case provided by American authorities:

- Giuseppe Bonanno (45, son of Giuseppe, “President” from Castellammare)
- Antonino “Tagliaria” (32, son of Agostino, landowner from Monte San Giuliano, residing in Trapani)
- Vito Castiglione (30, son of Angelo, peasant from Monte San Giuliano, residing in Custonaci)
- Pietro Rondello (35, son of Francesco, peasant from Castellammare)
- Martino Buccellato (21, son of Giovanni, peasant from Castellammare)
- Giovanni Buccellato (55, son of Felice, peasant from Castellammare)
- Salvatore Buccellato (52, son of Felice, peasant from Castellammare)
- Vincenzo Giallo (30, son of Giuseppe, peasant from Castellammare)
- Vito Giallo (37, son of Giuseppe, peasant from Castellammare)
- Vincenzo Milano (50, son of Sebastiano, peasant from Castellammare)

Though he was not included on this specific list, Girolamo Asaro was described as a "member" of the same "association" during the Costa investigation along with leaders the Ingoglias. The listed names were believed to be responsible for "many" crimes, including the conspiracy to murder Giuseppe Costa. Among other specific crimes revealed during the investigation, the above members allegedly stole a horse, a donkey, and other

animals from farms in the area, including a property directly between Giuseppe Bonanno and Giuseppe Ingoglia's estates.

Attempts to detain these members caused many of them to flee, leading to the arrests of only Stefano Ingoglia, Giovanni Buccellato, Salvatore Buccellato, and Vincenzo Milano. Italian authorities appear to have bundled the crimes together in their prosecution of the above "association" members and targeted them for their membership in the group, Sicily already having laws in place to combat what they termed an "*associazione dei malfattori*" (association of criminals). Girolamo Asaro, Stefano Ingoglia, Giuseppe Bonanno, the Giallo brothers, and Martino Buccellato were all convicted in 1898 on charges stemming from the case, including the Costa murder, but the duration of the sentences and whether the convictions were upheld is unknown, some of the convicts already fugitives and others confirmed to have been free by late 1899.

The 1896 case identified mafia figures across the northern Trapani coast.

It's obvious from surnames like Asaro, Bonanno, and Buccellato that the above "association" of "criminals and relatives of criminals" who formed "a society unto themselves" was the Castellammarese mafia. This list of names is limited to what investigators described as "leading members" and members accused of specific crimes, so it is not the whole of the local Family even though Sicilian *borgate* are typically much smaller than American Families. The participation of these men in the decision to murder Giuseppe Costa adds weight to investigators' belief that these were leading members or direct participants based on our understanding of mafia protocol, there being no need nor desire for the leadership to include the whole of the membership in a murder plot or every individual crime.

The Bonanno Clan

In his autobiography, Joe Bonanno describes his uncle Giuseppe "Peppe" Bonanno as a leading mafioso in Castellammare until his murder in 1899. Like the Giuseppe Bonanno from the 1896 investigation, Peppe Bonanno's father's name was also Giuseppe, Joe Bonanno sharing his name with both an uncle and grandfather. It is relatively uncommon in traditional Sicilian culture for a

son to share his given name with his own father, making it more likely Giuseppe Bonanno, son of Giuseppe, is Joe Bonanno's uncle. Joe Bonanno also stated that his uncle Peppe was only recently out of prison when he was killed, the timeline complementing this Giuseppe Bonanno's legal trouble from 1896.

The age given for Giuseppe Bonanno in documentation of the 1896 case is forty-five, however, which is ten years off from Peppe Bonanno's actual age at the time. Peppe's marriage record in 1894 places him at 32-years-old while his death record in late 1899 states he was thirty-eight. Birth records in Castellammare for 1861 are unavailable but no Giuseppe Bonannos were born in Castellammare during the surrounding years, making 1861 the most likely year of birth. Given the age of forty-five in 1896 appears to be exactly ten years off from his true age, it's possible they mixed up the first number or there was a transcription error.

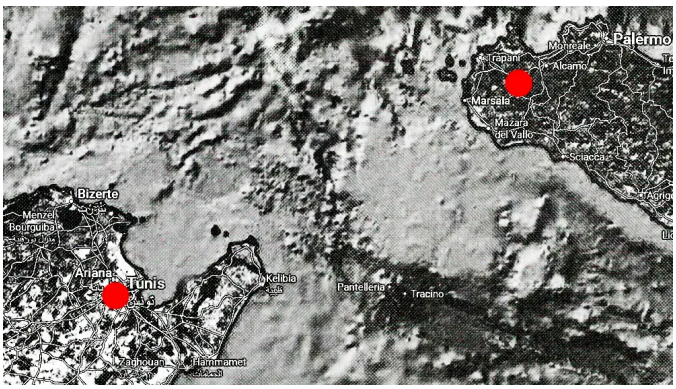
Peppe Bonanno's father Giuseppe was deceased by 1896 and he would have been much older than forty-five had he been alive, ruling him out. There are no other known candidates who fit the bill. Joe Bonanno identified his uncle Peppe as a mafia leader in Castellammare during the 1890s and this Giuseppe Bonanno was identified in 1896 as a "leading member" of the local mafia born to a father named Giuseppe much as Peppe was. The age given for Stefano Ingoglia in the 1896 case was also incorrect and this may be true for the elder Buccellatos as well, further indicating Giuseppe Bonanno's age was in error.

Joe Bonanno (pictured) identified his uncle Peppe as a mafia leader.

Peppe Bonanno was the third of the Bonanno brothers born to the senior Giuseppe Bonanno and his wife Vita Vallone. The eldest Bonanno brother, Giovanni, was born in 1858 and eventually settled in Tunis where he ran a ranch and owned horses, nephew Joe Bonanno claiming to have stayed with him for a time while en route to the United States in the 1920s. The younger Bonanno didn't deny his uncle Giovanni was a mafioso but did say Giovanni Bonanno was uninterested in assuming a leadership role in their mafia clan and remained aloof in North Africa.

Tunis had a large colony of immigrants from Trapani province given its geographic proximity to Sicily's western coast but it also had its own mafia Family once headed by early Bonanno leader Paolo Orlando from Camporeale, which is today part of Palermo province but belonged to Trapani until 1954. Sicilian *pentiti* like Dr. Melchiorre Allegra and Antonino Calderone confirmed the existence of a Tunis Family in the early 20th century but an anonymous letter sent to Italian authorities in 1909 specifically identified Orlando as a contemporary Brooklyn "*capo*" (boss) and the former "*capo*" of Tunis, Orlando living there in the 1890s before arriving in America. Joe Bonanno's wife Fay LaBruzzo was herself born in Tunis to Camporealese parents.

This Tunisian branch of Cosa Nostra existed until around World War II but many Trapanese mafiosi and their relatives passed through Tunis or spent time living there during the preceding decades. The Newark / Lucchese Accardi clan from Vita and Calatafimi, which also produced at least two Bonanno members, maintained connections to Tunis between the 1920s and 1940s. The Castellammare Family had affiliates living there as late as the 1940s, too, including Joe Bonanno's cousin Gaspare Magaddino and future Bonanno member Giuseppe Buccellato. Tunis was naturally an extension of the mafia's criminal network, investigators discovering that a large-scale mafia cattle rustling operation in 1920s and '30s Trapani headed by Giacomo Accardi from Salemi shipped stolen cattle to Tunis.



Tunis (L) attracted immigrants from Trapani province (R).

Giovanni Bonanno had a son named Salvatore who worked as a sculptor in Paris and hosted Joe Bonanno during another stop on the future New York boss's trip to America in the 1920s. An elder son of Giovanni, Giuseppe, was not mentioned by Joe Bonanno but he married Francesca Bonventre in 1911, the daughter of a Lorenzo Bonventre, relation to the well-known Bonventres undetermined. Giovanni Bonanno himself was married to a Sarcona, the same surname as Girolamo Asaro's mother Giuseppa. One peculiarity is that Joe Bonanno claims to have stayed with Giovanni Bonanno in Tunis around 1924

but an Italian death record says Giovanni Bonanno, son of Giuseppe Bonanno and Vita Vallone, died in Castellammare in 1915 at age fifty-six. Joe Bonanno had no reason to lie about staying with his uncle in Tunis so perhaps Giovanni's death was misreported back home.

The second Bonanno brother, Stefano, was born in 1860. Joe Bonanno described him as "a quiet and devoted family man" who vowed to never marry in order to take care of his mother Vita after the death of his father Giuseppe. Joe Bonanno did say that Stefano Bonanno acted as an advisor to younger brother Peppe, the successor of their mafia clan, implying Stefano was involved with the organization albeit not as an official leader. Stefano died in 1899 just months before Peppe but his death was ostensibly accidental, Stefano getting caught in a rock slide in the hills of Castellammare. Joe Bonanno said the clan blamed the Buccellatos for the disaster anyway, the two clans blindly attributing any form of misfortune to their local rivals. Peppe's own death was clearly nefarious: an employee of his property lured him outside in the middle of the night claiming the animals were acting up and when Peppe Bonanno stepped outside a waiting gunman executed him.

Joe Bonanno's references to the eldest two Bonanno brothers are fleeting and their place in the mafia is left fairly vague but Peppe's role is laid bare. Though Peppe died before his nephew was born, Joe described Peppe as having the "inward resources" and a "natural extroverted charm" that reinforced his status as a "leader of men", Peppe therefore inheriting the clan's "mantle of power". Joe Bonanno told a story about Peppe Bonanno instilling obedience in a young mafia protege by forcing him to endure a whipping despite having done nothing wrong, Peppe then demanding that the recruit whip his mentor back just as fiercely in return. Peppe Bonanno wanted to see how the recruit conducted himself during the beating, stressing not only the importance of a mafioso refusing to speak against his friends but also the ability to stay silent while enduring violent punishment.

Joe Bonanno's father Salvatore was significantly younger than the other brothers. Born in 1878, he was twenty years younger than his oldest brother Giovanni and seventeen years younger than Peppe, the closest brother in age. Salvatore initially studied the priesthood with his pious mother's encouragement but abandoned the holy path when Peppe was killed in 1899, Salvatore Bonanno then assuming leadership of his mafia clan at 21-years-old in his son's account. Joe Bonanno may or may not have embellished his father's importance in the Castellammare Family at that stage but we can presume Salvatore became a made member around that time and with this status came additional authority in their immediate clan.

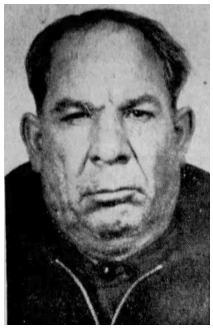
Salvatore Bonanno rose to prominence in 1899.

Salvatore Bonanno married Caterina Bonventre in 1904, cementing the Bonannos' ties to the Bonventre-Magaddino clan and creating a formidable mafia faction that took on even greater influence in Castellammare and eventually throughout America. In addition to Caterina's Bonventre relatives upholding the "Tradition" through her brothers Giuseppe, Pietro, Vito, and Giovanni, her maternal uncles Stefano, Giovanni, and Giuseppe Magaddino were devoted mafiosi, the latter two brothers producing sons who joined the upper echelon of the Castellammarese mafia network alongside the Bonventre brothers and Joe Bonanno. Caterina Bonventre's uncle Stefano Magaddino was particularly loyal to the Bonannos and assisted Salvatore with administering the clan's affairs after Peppe Bonanno's murder. The aforementioned marriage of Giovanni Bonanno's son to a Bonventre seven years later indicates further comingling between different offshoots of the two families.

Salvatore Bonanno spent several years in New York himself beginning in 1908 before returning to Sicily and serving in the military, eventually succumbing to lingering war wounds back in Castellammare. Joe Bonanno said his father was welcomed into the New York mafia environment during his stay and included a photo of Salvatore Bonanno with local Castellammarese leader Salvatore Saracino in A *Man of Honor*, Bonanno likely transferring membership into the Family his son eventually headed over twenty years later. Salvatore's line produced the only known Castellammarese "Bonannos" in the American mafia but one of Salvatore Bonanno's brothers also had an illegitimate son who became a mafioso in the United States.

The orphaned Giuseppe Silinonte was born in Castellammare in 1885 and raised by his adopted family as Giuseppe DiGirolamo but after coming to the United States took on his orphan name of Silinonte. Silinonte had a 1915 larceny arrest in Brooklyn then became active with the Castellammarese mafia faction in Endicott by the mid-1920s, engaging in bootlegging and eventually fleeing a double murder charge back to Brooklyn in the 1930s where he remained until his death in 1964. Three of his sons associated with the Bonanno, DeCavalcante, and Colombo Families in Brooklyn and two of them were named by an FBI source as Bonanno members, the brothers running gambling operations out of a fish store and private club originally

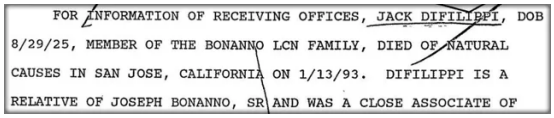
owned by their father. Silinonte's status as an illegitimate paternal first cousin of Joe Bonanno was confirmed by the FBI but it remains unknown which Bonanno brother fathered him. Despite his illegitimacy, Silinonte's sons told the FBI they knew their father to be close to Joe Bonanno.



Silinonte was an illegitimate Bonanno son.

Much as Salvatore Bonanno's namesake grandson "Bill" joined Cosa Nostra, Peppe Bonanno had a confirmed grandson of his own who became active with the Bonanno Family in the United States. Peppe and his wife Laura DiFilippi had a daughter named Vita who later married Girolamo DiFilippi, seemingly a maternal cousin. Vita and Girolamo had a son named Gioacchino "Jack" DiFilippi in 1925 who came to the United States from Castellammare in 1955 where he quickly became a close companion of his mother's first cousin Joe Bonanno while working legitimately as a commodities broker.

Even after Bonanno was ousted as boss in the mid-1960s, Jack DiFilippi remained loyal to Joe and Bill Bonanno, getting entangled in legal trouble with them in the 1970s and early '80s while living in San Jose. Joe Bonanno harshly rebuked public claims that DiFilippi was a "loyal soldier" of his but an FBI report at the time of Jack DiFilippi's death in 1993 identified him as a "member of the Bonanno LCN Family". Another DiFilippi, Giuseppe DiFilippi (b. 1899), was a confirmed Bonanno member in Brooklyn who became *consigliere* in the early '70s though it's unknown if he relates to Peppe Bonanno's wife and son-in-law beyond sharing Castellammarese heritage and the same surname.

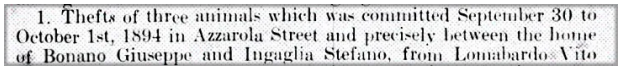

FOR INFORMATION OF RECEIVING OFFICES, JACK DIFILIPPI, DOB
8/29/25, MEMBER OF THE BONANNO LCN FAMILY, DIED OF NATURAL
CAUSES IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA ON 1/13/93. DIFILIPPI IS A
RELATIVE OF JOSEPH BONANNO, SR AND WAS A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF

Peppe's grandson Jack DiFilippi was active with the Bonanno Family.

Despite the prominence of Joe Bonanno and his immediate kin, the Bonanno surname surfaces rarely throughout Castellammarese mafia history, this family of Bonannos being the only known members with that name in the United States and Sicily. Neither is the Bonanno surname particularly

common among the broader Castellammarese “civilian” population. The Giuseppe Costa murder investigation took place before 1899, so Joe Bonanno's uncle Peppe would have been alive at this time and the timeline matches the period in which Peppe was described by his nephew as a local mafia leader experiencing trouble with the law. The Giuseppe Bonanno in the 1896 case was a property owner like Peppe, too.

With the above in mind, the 1896 case completely shatters Joe Bonanno's own account of the mafia his relatives were involved with in Castellammare del Golfo. Bonanno’s description of a noble mafia tradition might have described an element of the mafia he grew up around, and there certainly was a thriving *alta mafia* in contemporary Sicily comprised of professionals, politicians, noblemen, and ostensibly forward-facing individuals who operated within the larger Cosa Nostra umbrella, but the investigation showed that the mafia in Castellammare just prior to Bonanno’s birth was equally a group of violent horse and donkey thieves with criminal records who terrorized their neighbors and even stole dogs. Giuseppe Bonanno’s own neighbor Vito Lombardo was one of the victims.


1. Thefts of three animals which was committed September 30 to October 1st, 1894 in Azzarola Street and precisely between the home of Bonano Giuseppe and Ingaglia Stefano, from Lomabardo Vito

The Castellammarese mafia regularly engaged in animal theft.

It is difficult to reconcile Joe Bonanno's lofty view with this account even though the mafia was multi-dimensional and petty crime was just one aspect of their broader scope. Bonanno did say that the Bonanno and Buccellato clans accused each other of stealing animals but doesn’t acknowledge any actual thefts carried out by the Bonanno group. Animal thefts and cattle rustling referenced during the 1896 case did not show the mafiosi to be stealing from each other but from victims unaffiliated with the mafia and the Buccellatos in the case were by all appearances on the same “side” as Giuseppe Bonanno in 1896.

Giuseppe Bonanno was referred to as a “President from Castellammare” on a translated list of mafiosi accompanying the 1896 case but the word “President” is crossed out with an illegible word handwritten over it. “President” was likely a mistranslation of *possidente*, meaning “property owner” and a signifier of considerable social status at the time. The investigation showed that Bonanno did in fact own property near the Ingoglia estate in the Baida district and Joe Bonanno’s story of Peppe Bonanno’s death similarly implies he was living on an estate. Joe Bonanno also confirmed that the “Bonanno House” in late 1800s Castellammare was highly influential and the family owned land,

cattle, and horses. Peppe's 1894 marriage record further confirms he was a "*possidente*".

1--Bonano Giuseppe of the late Giuseppe,45 yearsold;~~Presi-~~
~~dent~~ from Castellammare.

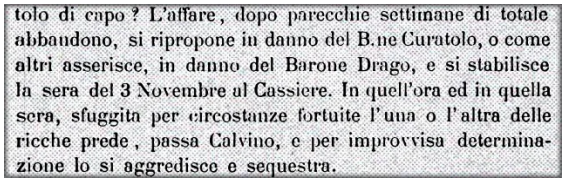
Bonanno was identified as a "President" but they likely meant "*possidente*".

The 1896 investigation was not the first time a Giuseppe Bonanno was identified as an important Castellammarese mafioso. Thirteen years earlier an investigation into the kidnapping of the Duke Francesco Paolo Calvino produced similar intelligence on the contemporary Castellammarese mafia when local figures were prosecuted after holding the Duke for ransom. The late 1883 case explicitly used the word "mafia" and described the group as "solidly organized". One of the principal members was again a mafioso named Giuseppe Bonanno but his associates and the broader context of the investigation were equally fascinating and will be explored in-depth below.

The Duke Calvino Kidnapping

Duke Francesco Paolo Calvino was a wealthy nobleman living at a *villa* in Trapani *citta* prior to falling into the mafia's hands. He was not the initial target of his kidnappers, however, as underworld figures Leonardo Isca of Trapani and Giovanni Pace of Monte San Giuliano first formulated a plot to kidnap a Baron Curatola in Salemi in October of 1883 but the plan fell through when three of the would-be assailants failed to show, these being a farmer named Gaspare Bica and two men identified only by the surnames Asaro and Lentini. A plot to kidnap another Baron named Drago was similarly abandoned.

In November of 1883, the conspirators spotted the Duke Calvino traveling by carriage near the Cassiere neighborhood of Trapani and armed assailants accosted and kidnapped the noble, taking him to a coastal cave in the Pedale area of Castellammare. "Pedale", now known as Punta Pirale, refers to a stretch of coast northwest of the town that partially parallels the road leading into the Baida area. The Duke was held captive in the Pedale cave for thirty-two days while his captors demanded a ransom of $120,000 lire, forcing Calvino to write five letters to his family and friends requesting the payment. One of the men guarding Calvino was never identified but he was described as refined, educated, polite, and well-dressed in contrast with his more rugged collaborators.


tolo di capo ? L'affare, dopo parecchie settimane di totale abbandono, si ripropone in danno del B.ne Curatolo, o come altri asserisce, in danno del Barone Drago, e si stabilisce la sera del 3 Novembre al Cassiere. In quell'ora ed in quella sera, sfuggita per circostanze fortuite l'una o l'altra delle ricche prede, passa Calvino, e per improvvisa determinazione lo si aggredisce e sequestra.

Two failed plots eventually led to Duke Calvino's kidnapping.

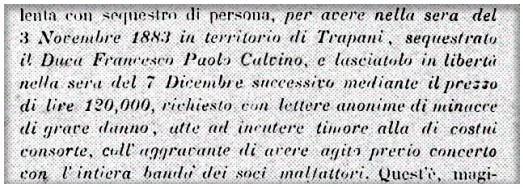
The refined captor appeared to act in a supervisory capacity and allegedly wrote drafts of the letters Duke Calvino was instructed to send his family, thus controlling what the Duke told them. At one point the hostage addressed this refined man as "father" and the kidnapper responded by telling Calvino he was young, unmarried, and had no children. The man added that he was there with the Duke not by choice but to fulfill an assignment given to him. Duke Calvino's abductors interestingly had inside information on what was going on in the Calvino family's household and other intelligence relevant to the investigation in other parts of Trapani province.

The Duke's family ultimately agreed to pay the ransom though some accounts suggest $90k lire was paid instead of the $120k requested. A rendezvous point was established in town and the exchange was facilitated through use of the code word "*limone*", this meeting with Calvino's representative arranged by the refined captor. Calvino was then freed in December, the gentlemanly criminal accompanying him to town and giving Calvino twelve lire for travel expenses. The gentleman was noted to have worn gloves throughout his guardianship of the kidnapped Duke.

The Duke returned home to Trapani but law enforcement intensified their pursuit of the kidnappers throughout the month of December and after several waves of arrests ended up detaining a total of 82 individuals throughout the province before the end of the month. The ransom money was never recovered but it was reportedly split between the conspirators. By the time of the 1885 trial, there were only 24 of the original 82 names still accused, though some of them were only charged with receiving money rather than directly participating in the Duke's abduction and captivity. There were varying degrees of cooperation during the case and the defense argued that some of the confessions were coerced through torture or the result of personal misgivings and thus biased.

Investigators blamed the Calvino affair on the "mafia" and prosecuted the arrestees as an "*associazione dei malfattori*", a RICO-like designation identifying the culprits as part of an ongoing criminal organization rather than a circumstantial group carrying out a single criminal act. The Trapanese mafia "organization" was said to be divided into "districts" that included other villages around Trapani province in addition to Castellammare, including

Monte San Giuliano, Alcamo, San Vito lo Capo, and Salemi, plus there were interactions between Trapanese mafiosi and figures from Corleone. The Castellammarese mafia in 1883 unsurprisingly practiced *omerta*, investigators observing that the group maintained a principal of "silence" and "courage". The investigation noted that although members of the group confessed to the charge of extortion, they refused to admit the existence of the organization, paralleling modern American members who plead guilty to certain crimes without acknowledging Cosa Nostra.


lenta con sequestro di persona, *per avere nella sera del 3 Novembre 1883 in territorio di Trapani, sequestrato il Duca Francesco Paolo Calcino, e lasciatolo in libertà nella sera del 7 Dicembre successivo mediante il prezzo di lire 120,000, richiesto con lettere anonime di minacce di grave danno, atte ad incutere timore alla di costui consorte, coll'aggravante di avere agito previo concerto con l'intiera banda dei soci malfattori.* Quest'è, magi-

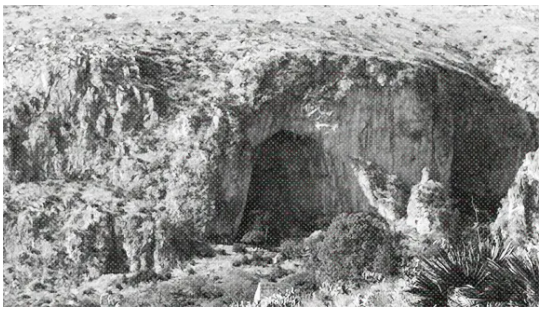
The Trapanese mafia kidnapped Duke Calvino in 1883.

Giovanni Pace, who along with Leonardo Isca formulated the original plot against Baron Curatola, was said to be the "*capo*" (boss) of Monte San Giuliano. A Vincenzo Gambicchia was similarly named as the "*capo*" of San Vito lo Capo and Macari while a Lentini was "*capo*" of Trapani *citta*. Michele Tedesco from Trapani *citta* was initially identified as the overall leader of the "association" though this designation was dropped due to unspecified political pressure and Tedesco was instead tried as a simple "member". Eight other individuals were said to head various rural areas of the province but were not further identified, these likely being villages in the southern Trapani interior near Salemi. The initial plot and kidnapping were reportedly carried out by figures closer to the vicinity of Trapani *citta* but the Castellammaresi were involved in logistics and guarding the Duke in their locale.

Though none of the cooperators appear to have held significant status in the local mafia, some of them like Antonino Renda were what we would today call "associates". Renda testified that he and his brothers at one time reported to a man named Alberto Genna in Castellammare then were reassigned to another figure named Giacomo Spadaro. Genna was upset with the new arrangement, much as a modern Cosa Nostra member might complain about his associate being "released" to another member or Family. Renda also spoke to his superiors about the upper leadership of the Castellammare group and authorities were able to get a glimpse into the general operating structure of the organization.

The 1883 Castellammarese group was headed by "*capo*" Francesco Plescia who fled Castellammare during the investigation, leaving Paolo "Naschino" Valenti in charge, the latter's nickname meaning "Little Nose". The prosecution

argued that either Plescia or Valenti could have been the refined gentleman who watched over Calvino at the Pedale cave but the defense responded that neither man was educated, conflicting with the description of Calvino's primary captor. Plescia was alleged to have helped plan the kidnapping and both he and Valenti were accused of visiting the Pedale cave during the Duke's captivity.



Coastal caves were utilized by Castellammarese mafiosi.

Plescia was specifically referred to during the case as the "invisible" *capo* while Valenti was the "visible" *capo*. Their relationship even before Plescia fled was seemingly that of co-leaders. Another leading figure particularly close to Valenti was identified as Giuseppe Bonanno although his actual role in the Calvino affair was elusive. Alberto Genna told Renda that Bonanno's "*statura*" (stature) in the organization was akin to Valenti but scolded Antonino Renda for mentioning their names, Genna stating the involvement of Valenti and Bonanno in the Calvino kidnapping was meant to be kept secret.

The 1885 trial for the Duke Calvino kidnapping resulted in convictions for the following men:

- Leonardo Isca – Convicted as one of the main instigators and participants in the kidnapping.
- Giovanni Pace – Convicted for his direct role in the abduction and guarding of the Duke, alleged to be the *capo* of Monte San Giuliano.
- Gaspare Bica – Convicted despite the defense arguing he was absent during planning/execution of the crime.
- (First Name Unknown) Lentini – Convicted, alleged to be the *capo* of Trapani *citta*.
- Vincenzo Gambicchia – Convicted, alleged to be the *capo* of the Macari–San Vito lo Capo area.
- Paolo Valenti – Convicted for his role in guarding the Duke, alleged to be standing in as *capo* of Castellammare.

- Michele Tedesco – Convicted as an "association" member after the original "overall leader" claim was reduced.

Some defendants who previously confessed to the kidnapping were acquitted as their confessions were allegedly coerced while others escaped conviction due to lack of evidence. Mid-level figures from Castellammare like Alberto Genna and Giacomo Spadaro appear to have escaped conviction. Despite leading authorities to a cave in Pedale where he claimed the Duke was previously housed, *pentito* Antonino Renda was regarded as an unreliable witness and his involvement in the plot was minimal despite his picking up scraps of valuable intelligence from Genna and Spadaro. Outside of the leadership, the Castellammarese figures associated with the kidnapping brought food and other supplies to Calvino's captors, carried messages, and were involved in transporting the Duke to and from the cave but they were not central to the main conspiracy.

Alleged *capo* Francesco Plescia was never brought to trial as he successfully evaded authorities through 1885 and it's unknown if he was ever discovered. Other peripheral figures were also tried and convicted but went unnamed in available documentation, much of this information sourced from "*L'associazione dei malfattori in Provincia di Trapani e l'estorsione con sequestro in danno del duca Calvino*". This 1887 document revolves around the defense's attempt to appeal the 1885 convictions of the aforementioned mafiosi and addresses peripheral information relevant to the investigation and trial beyond the kidnapping alone but doesn't mention the sentences the convicted defendants received.

L'ASSOCIAZIONE DEI MALFATTORI
IN
PROVINCIA DI TRAPANI

The Duke's kidnappers were prosecuted as an "association of criminals."

The descriptions of Francesco Plescia and Paolo Valenti could suggest Valenti was Plescia's *sostituto* (literally "substitute", akin to acting boss) or perhaps the *sottocapo* (underboss) or *consigliere*. The SanGiorgi Report, an exposé on the Palermo Families just over fifteen years after the 1883 Calvino case, noted that the "*capo*" of each Family had a designated "*sostituto*" who directed the group in his absence. The physician Dr. Melchiorre Allegra, a native of Castelvetrano in Trapani who was made in Palermo's Pagliarelli district in the late 1910s, later cooperated and stated that the Family *consigliere* typically served as the *capo*'s "*sostituto*" in his absence. Salvatore "Bill" Bonanno made a similar remark in

The Last Testament of Bill Bonanno, stating that the *consigliere* was traditionally the stand-in as acting boss. Nicola Gentile transferred between the American and Sicilian branches of the "*Onorata Società*" at various points in the early 20th century and also used the term "*sostituto*" in his memoir *Vita da Capomafia* to refer to early American members delegated to represent the boss in official mafia affairs.

The mafia is highly strict in its use of formal designations and accurately documenting the mafia phenomenon requires the same precision. Someone is either a made member or they aren't. Someone is either the official boss or they aren't. This is true for all of the ranks within Cosa Nostra. Factional conflicts and political disputes can muddy the waters in terms of who holds a given position but in a stable Family these formalities are black and white. It is the operational side of mafia activity that features a spectrum of grey and at a glance it can be difficult to separate the organizational from the operational, the two sometimes meeting in the middle, but the role an underworld figure plays in a criminal operation may not accurately reflect his formal status in the organization. As outsiders we are not always privy to these details and this is especially true for historic Sicilian mafia groups where little is known about their formal structure beyond a loose pecking order of leading figures, forcing us to take certain details at face value.

The general picture of the Castellammarese mafia presented by authorities in 1883 and 1896 appears to be accurate based on the evidence presented. The men described as leaders did demonstrate influence and authority, these men also tending to cast a wide net of connections to mafosi in other parts of the province as is typical of the leadership class. The figures accused of being association "members" represented a middle tier of loyal adherents close to the leadership who were consistently engaged in the organization's activities but not part of the top strata themselves. Antonino Renda's understanding of Giuseppe Bonanno's leading "*statura*" in 1883, Paolo Valenti and Francesco Plescia's "visible" and "invisible" *capo* dynamic, Girolamo Asaro's supervisory role in the Giuseppe Costa murder, and the references to "leading members" attending meetings with Giuseppe Ingoglia in 1896 to decide Costa's fate hint at a hierarchy beyond the boss alone even though this can't be confidently mapped out in formal terms.

We can't assume every observation is accurate in these obscure accounts of the 19th century mafia but there are no alternative sources from the era to counter them nor is there anything particularly questionable about the claims made in these investigations. There is additional depth behind the names in these early Castellammarese investigations that will be explored in

subsequent segments, but to fully comprehend what was being observed in Castellammare in 1883 and 1896, it must be understood what contemporary investigations revealed about the mafia in neighboring provinces. The following section strays from Castellammare del Golfo as it primarily concerns other 19th century investigations outside of Trapani and delves into the historic structure of the mafia in both Sicily and the United States. This commentary is essential to the story of Girolamo Asaro and his Castellammarese confederates, though, as it places their mafia activity in the proper context and helps illustrate the highly intricate world they existed in.

Contemporary Cases & American Parallels

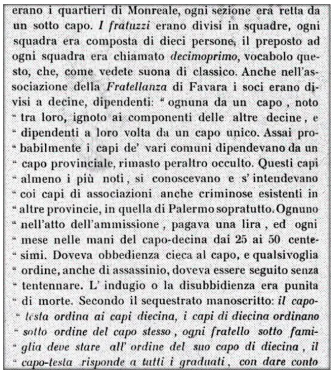
An account in *La Mafia e I Mafiosi* by Antonino Cutrera, published in 1900, identified the role of "*capo*" (boss) in Monreale during the previous decade and observed district-based "*sotto capi*" (underbosses) and a "*consiglio direttivo*" (executive council) at the organization's upper ranks. The boss and underboss titles require little elaboration but Sicilian *pentiti* and early US sources described the existence of a Family *consiglio* (council) in the 20th century Sicilian and American mafias that was distinct from the standard administration and included multiple *consiglieri*. This body carried out duties akin to the typical *consigliere* but as a full council, this *consiglio direttivo* in Monreale possibly an even earlier example. Illegal proceeds were collected by the Monreale organization to be used for members in need, akin to the "war chests" used by American Families. Members were also referred to as "*amici*" (friends), much as today's Cosa Nostra refers to a given member as an *amico nostra* or "friend of ours".

An 1872 investigation in Bagheria uncovered similar information about a group referred to as the "*Fratuzzi*" (Little Brothers), a term also used in contemporary Corleone. The *Fratuzzi* was organized into "*decine*" under a "*decimoprimo*" ("first of ten", a variation of *capodecina* or "boss of ten") who in turn reported to the head "*capo*" and an advisory body called "*segretari*" (secretaries). The 1883 "*Fratellanza*" (Brotherhood) investigation in Favara, Agrigento, observed that the "*famiglia*" was similarly divided into crews, each of them under a "*capo di decina*" who took direction from the "*capo testa*" (head boss) and he in turn consulted with the "*graduati*" (graduates, i.e. senior members).

The *segretari* and *graduati* were likely comparable to the *consiglio direttivo* found analogously in Monreale, this formal council also taking on various euphemisms in the United States such as the "*seggia*" (chair) in Milwaukee. Los Angeles Family informant Frank Bompensiero was told by Chicago member Phil Alderisio in 1969 that the Chicago Family still utilized this body at that

time and referred to it as the "*consignu*" [ph], a dialect variant of *consiglio*. Detroit, San Jose, and other Families maintained a formal council into the 1960s as well and San Jose member informants reported that the body's *consiglieri* were elected to sit on it, a process also described by Augie Maniaci in Milwaukee. A chairman or secretary was elected to preside over the council in San Jose and these positions were fixed rather than rotating, the same senior individuals maintaining seats where they voted on matters of concern to the organization and mediated issues involving the membership.

In the United States, the boss, underboss, and select captains sat on these councils but so did one or two senior soldiers, the *consiglio* not simply a synonym for the Family administration, and the councils typically ranged from five to seven members. In the later Sicilian mafia, *pentiti* like Tommaso Buscetta of Porta Nuova and Antonino Calderone of Catania also confirmed the use of a Family *consiglio* comprised of multiple *consiglieri*. Calderone added that *capidecine* could sit on the council in Families with only one or two *capidecine* but Families with numerous captains would not include them on the *consiglio*, Calderone emphasizing that the duties of the *consiglieri* (plural) were kept separate from the *capidecine*. Calderone also stated that a *consigliere* was an "ordinary" *uomo d'onore* (man of honor) who is chosen for the role, further separating this position from the traditional top-down hierarchy even though he commented that this role can be as "important" as the *rappresentante* (literally "representative" but a synonym for "boss").



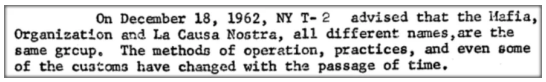
erano i quartieri di Monreale, ogni sezione era retta da un sotto capo. *I fratuzzi* erano divisi in squadre, ogni squadra era composta di dieci persone, il preposto ad ogni squadra era chiamato *decimoprimo*, vocabolo questo, che, come vedete suona di classico. Anche nell'associazione della *Fratellanza* di Favara i soci erano divisi a decine, dipendenti: " ognuna da un capo , noto " tra loro, ignoto ai componenti delle altre decine , e " dipendenti a loro volta da un capo unico. Assai pro- " babilmente i capi de' vari comuni dipendevano da un " capo provinciale, rimasto peraltro occulto. Questi capi " almeno i più noti , si conoscevano e s' intendevano " coi capi di associazioni anche criminose esistenti in " altre provincie, in quella di Palermo sopratutto. Ognuno " nell'atto dell'ammissione , pagava una lira , ed ogni " mese nelle mani del capo-decina dai 25 ai 50 cente- " simi. Doveva obbedienza cieca al capo, e qualsivoglia " ordine, anche di assassinio, doveva essere seguito senza " tentennare. L' indugio o la disubbidienza era punita " di morte. Secondo il sequestrato manoscritto: *il capo-* " *testa ordina ai capi diecina, i capi di diecina ordinano* " *sotto ordine del capo stesso , ogni fratello sotto fami-* " *glia deve stare all' ordine del suo capo di diecina , il* " *capo-testa risponde a tutti i graduati , con dare conto*

Other provinces used familiar ranks during the 19th century.

Fratellanza was once used somewhat universally to refer to the mafia, early Secret Service informants also using the term in reference to the American organization. The term *Fratuzzi* in Bagheria and Corleone was an obvious derivative and it requires little imagination to understand why "brotherhood" was central to the mafia's self-concept, *fratelli* (brothers) being one of the early terms for membership used by Nicola Gentile and Dr. Melchiorre Allegra. Gentile referred to the mafia as the "*Onorata Società*" (Honored Society) and variations of this phrase were also used by mainland organizations like the

Campanian Camorra and Calabrian 'ndrangheta, these groups distinct from the Sicilian mafia but sharing a common nature.

The 19th century investigations uncovered an assortment of local names used for different branches of the Sicilian mafia in various *comuni* but as Joe Bonanno himself said in his writings, the broader organization has no true name and members tend to utilize the term that suits them as individuals. Bonanno preferred to call the mafia his "Tradition" and rejected the term "Cosa Nostra" while acknowledging that all of these euphemisms refer to the same entity. Members typically use whatever term is popular locally, these superficial differences in terminology not a barrier to mutual recognition within the formal mafia system they share. Numerous FBI sources reiterated the same basic point while acknowledging small changes and variations to the organization over time.

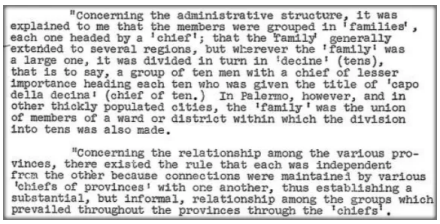

On December 18, 1962, NY T-2 advised that the Mafia, Organization and La Causa Nostra, all different names, are the same grcup. The methods of operation, practices, and even some of the customs have changed with the passage of time.

The mafia organization as a whole used different names.

That an assortment of 19th century Sicilian mafia groups utilized a comparable structure and maintained similar practices to the 20th century Sicilian and American mafia is significant but localized structure alone does not define the mafia. Rather, it is the wider system of mutual recognition that reinforces the status and identity of each Family and member. Modern Sicilian mafiosi commonly use the phrase "*u stessa cosa*" ("the same thing") to refer to one another while making formal introductions, underscoring that Cosa Nostra members are part of the same entity regardless of Family affiliation or geography.

Beyond the structure of individual Families, the SanGiorgi Report from the turn of the 20th century uncovered the existence of a "*capo supremo*" in Palermo *citta* with authority above the other Family bosses who headed Palermo's various districts. *La Mafia e I Mafiosi*, published contemporaneously with the SanGiorgi Report, also refers to a "*capo provinciale*" who the other *capi* in a given province took direction from. Dr. Allegra was aware of the *capo provinciale / capoprovincia* role between the 1910s and 1930s, identifying Salvatore Maranzano in this position over Trapani province during the 1920s before he came to America. In Allegra's view, the different Sicilian provinces had a degree of independence from one another but interprovincial connections were maintained through the *capo provinciale*. The *mandamento* system, where small groups of neighboring Sicilian Families are organized into administrative districts under a *capomandamento* who in turn elect a

capoprovincia above them, was not developed until the 1950s but there was a provincial leadership structure as far back as the previous century.



"Concerning the administrative structure, it was explained to me that the members were grouped in 'families', each one headed by a 'chief'; that the 'family' generally extended to several regions, but wherever the 'family' was a large one, it was divided in turn in 'decine' (tens), that is to say, a group of ten men with a chief of lesser importance heading each ten who was given the title of 'capo della decina' (chief of ten.) In Palermo, however, and in other thickly populated cities, the 'family' was the union of members of a ward or district within which the division into tens was also made.

"Concerning the relationship among the various provinces, there existed the rule that each was independent from the other because connections were maintained by various 'chiefs of provinces' with one another, thus establishing a substantial, but informal, relationship among the groups which prevailed throughout the provinces through the 'chiefs'.

Allegra learned of the ranks, including *capo provinciale*, in the 1910s.

The early stages of the 1883 Duke Calvino investigation suggested Michele Tedesco of Trapani had a larger role over the bosses who headed single districts throughout the province. It's unclear what evidence placed him as the top leader but he could be considered a possible *capoprovincia* of the era, Tedesco said to hold meetings at a tavern in the Borgo Annunziata neighborhood of Trapani in full public view of a nearby police station. As mentioned, Tedesco's designation as a mafia "leader" was dropped to simple "member" during the course of the Calvino case due to an unspecified political controversy, suggesting Tedesco was well-connected. Much of the defense's argument during the trial rested on a general claim that the defendants were victims of political persecution.

Along with Dr. Allegra identifying Salvatore Maranzano as the Trapani *capoprovincia* in the 1920s, Tommaso Buscetta identified Andrea Fazio of Trapani *citta* as the *capoprovincia* by the 1950s, the obscure Fazio also serving as the informal *capo dei capi* of the entire Sicilian mafia at that time according to Buscetta. As Buscetta and other *pentiti* explained, there was no formal *capo dei capi* in the Sicilian mafia though one of the island's provincial heads generally took on this de facto status, this remaining true even in the era of so-called "boss of bosses" figures like Michele Greco of Palermo and Salvatore "Toto" Riina from Corleone. Joe Bonanno was similarly dismissive of the *capo dei capi* concept in the early American mafia, insisting "*capo consigliere*" was a more appropriate description of the role. The late 1890s "*capo supremo*" role in Palermo described in the SanGiorgi Report is reminiscent of the *capo dei capi* term but in technical terms could have been the *capo provinciale* of Palermo province or perhaps the mafia-dense Palermo *citta* was given its own equivalent head due to the sheer number of Families operating in the city.

The "*Fratellanza*" investigation in 1883 Favara identified other organized branches of the mafia in neighboring Agrigento towns and *La Mafia e I Mafiosi* similarly states that the *Fratuzzi* operated in other *comuni* within the Palermo interior between Bagheria and Corleone. There was communication and

collaboration between mafiosi throughout the different towns in these regions and investigators framed the different branches as outgrowths of the same phenomenon. Other investigations observed analogous mafia organizations in towns like Sciacca in Agrigento and Castrogiovanni in Enna, plus Misilmeri and Villabate in Palermo. All of these locations have continued to maintain Cosa Nostra Families up to present day and most of them produced a significant number of early American members.

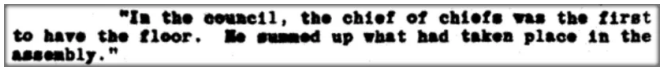
The 1883 investigation in Castellammare indicated Trapani was no less organized, describing how the organization was divided into "districts" throughout the province who each had their own *capo* but worked in unison, possibly under the direction of Tedesco. *La Mafia e I Mafiosi* noted the existence of the mafia in Trapani as well as Caltanissetta but believed the mafia was less concentrated in those provinces than it was in Palermo and Agrigento. This observation is still true 125 years later in that Trapani has fewer recognized Families than Palermo and Agrigento despite the prevalence of historic mafia activity in the province.

TRAPANI
PALERMO
AGRIGENTO
Mandamenti provincia di Caltanissetta
centro del fenomeno sociale in esame, e si mantiene uguale per quasi tutta la provincia. Si attenua invece un poco nelle province di Trapani e Caltanissetta, e si rafforza nuovamente in quella di Girgenti, ove anche qui raggiunge un grado elevato di densità.
The mafia in Trapani is distributed relatively sparsely.

The Palermo and Agrigento cases revealed that member initiation closely resembled later Cosa Nostra ceremonies. The primary oath was in some cases identical and the basic rules were the same apart from general anachronisms and esoteric verbosity. The differences that did exist between the 19th century Sicilian mafia and modern Cosa Nostra were generally superficial or decorative in nature though one significant difference is that members in 19th century Sicily had a coded question and answer dialogue they could engage in with another member that, if answered correctly, counted as a formal introduction between members. This was later abandoned in favor of the strict "third party" rule where a member can only be introduced to another member by a third individual who has already been formally introduced to both members, the mafia likely abandoning the "coded" self-introduction due to security concerns.

The accounts of Nicola Gentile from Siculiana and Secret Service informant Salvatore Clemente from Corleone confirm this highly-organized system was brought to the United States and governed the rules of the American mafia in the first years of the 20th century. Gentile was inducted into the mafia in Philadelphia in the early 1900s and transferred to multiple Families in the United States and Sicily during his extensive travels over the next three decades, the structure and formal nature of the organization he described mirroring many aspects of these early Sicilian investigations as well as the post-1930s American mafia, there being no question this was one continuous organization regardless of time, place, or the euphemism used to describe it. Joe Bonanno made no core distinction between his own New York mafia and the organization his ancestors belonged to in Sicily, all of the Bonannos belonging to the same "Tradition".

In addition to identifying positions like *capo / rappresentante*, *sottocapo*, *consigliere*, *capodecina*, and the existence of a Family *consiglio* in early 20th century America, Nicola Gentile also spoke about the *capo dei capi* and a national advisory body called the *Gran Consiglio* (Great Council). Though he never states it explicitly, some of Gentile's references could indicate the *capo dei capi* was the chairman of this national council, much as individual Family *consigli* had their own elected chairman or secretary. The American *capo dei capi* position dates back to at least the turn of the 20th century and likely much further, Giuseppe Morello from Corleone the first confirmed leader in this role around 1901. Gentile also spoke of the *Assemblea Generale* (General Assembly), a formal meeting of national leaders and / or their representatives where major issues were discussed and mediated.


"In the council, the chief of chiefs was the first to have the floor. He summed up what had taken place in the assembly."

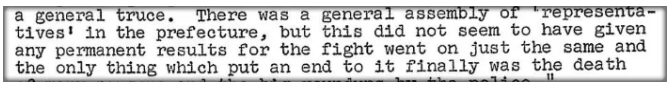
Gentile confirmed the existence of a national council, the *Gran Consiglio*.

Morello himself referenced both the national *Consiglio* and *Assemblea Generale* in a 1909 letter to the new Chicago *rappresentante* Rosario DiSpenza from Ciminna. Morello explained that members of the *Consiglio* could attend *Assemblea* meetings but not directly vote or participate, their purpose apparently advisory in nature rather than openly authoritative. Nicola Gentile alluded to serving on the *Gran Consiglio* for a period himself and also stated that the *Gran Consiglio* advised the *capo dei capi*. At the peak of his own power, Nicola Gentile served as a national advocate for his network of friends and extended *paesani*, often petitioning to save their lives or settle disputes brought before the *Assemblea* even when it didn't directly concern Gentile or the Family he belonged to at the time. Gentile also challenged *capo dei capi*

Salvatore D'Aquila at these meetings and on at least one occasion successfully countered D'Aquila's otherwise dominant will, showing the *capo dei capi*'s power and influence was not absolute.

Giuseppe Morello made a hard distinction between the function of the *Gran Consiglio* and the *Assemblea Generale* in his letter to DiSpenza, Morello communicating the importance of understanding these bodies and their corresponding protocol. One anecdote from Gentile indicates the council met privately with the *capo dei capi* at *Assemblea* meetings to discuss evidence and arguments that had been laid out during a given underworld trial, these "*Gran Consiglieri*" perhaps intended to be a neutral conduit between the *capo* and the country's various *rappresentanti*. The *Gran Consiglio* was evidently a more nuanced entity but the *Assemblea Generale* appears to be a fairly straightforward concept: bosses from around the country and their delegates met to discuss issues of national importance and cast votes if necessary to resolve mafia-specific issues. According to Nicola Gentile, the *capo dei capi* chaired these meetings but occasionally sent his own *sostituto* to represent him, Salvatore D'Aquila from Palermo utilizing Giuseppe Traina from Belmonte Mezzagno in this capacity. The national role of D'Aquila and Traina was in addition to their local positions as administrators of the future Gambino Family in New York.

Dr. Melchiorre Allegra also referenced an *Assemblea Generale* meeting in Sicily attended by mafia *rappresentanti* during the mid-1920s Palermo war, an indication the Americans carried the *Assemblea* over from the Sicilian mafia much as they did with the organization's rules and ranks. I've yet to see mention of a *Gran Consiglio* in historic Sicily but the existence of *capi provinciali* in the 19th and early 20th centuries may have been an equivalent. Given the *Assemblea Generale* meetings existed in Sicily, it's plausible the Sicilian mafia had some form of *Gran Consiglio* like the American branch, perhaps a council of the provincial heads. The existence of the *consiglio direttivo* in 19th century Monreale and the ongoing use of a Family *consiglio* in 20th century Sicily and America could suggest the organization's national administration was intended to mirror individual Families through the use of a governing council.


a general truce. There was a general assembly of 'representa-
tives' in the prefecture, but this did not seem to have given
any permanent results for the fight went on just the same and
the only thing which put an end to it finally was the death

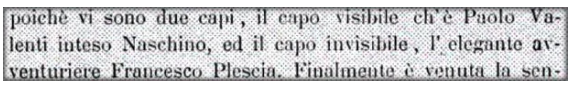
Allegra referred to an *Assemblea Generale* in 1920s Palermo.

The prominent Sicilian *pentiti* inducted after World War II were aware of historic *capi provinciali* but did not mention an earlier council or

Commission, these sources under the impression that the Sicilian mafia Commission was a novel concept introduced to them by their American counterparts during a 1956 meeting that included Joe Bonanno and other American leaders. However, the American Commission was similarly regarded as a revolutionary concept by many insiders even though the *Gran Consiglio* and *Assemblea Generale* meetings prove there was already a national mediating body and functioning mafia government in the United States for decades by the time the Commission was introduced, these sources apparently too young or low in stature to have been familiar with the earlier national structure which may have been discussed only on a "need to know" basis.

Younger *pentiti* like Tommaso Buscetta were not inducted into Cosa Nostra until after World War II when the mafia was reorganizing after years of persecution and exile under Benito Mussolini, many Families lying dormant and the national leadership apparatus dissolved, so if an earlier council or Commission existed they may not have been aware of it. The formation of the Sicilian Commission in the mid-20th century is significant in that the Sicilian mafia produced the American mafia but the Sicilian mafia then sought guidance and borrowed influence from their American counterparts during the Sicilian mafia's recovery from Italian Fascism. Much as we can learn about the historic American mafia by looking at the Sicilian mafia, the inverse is also true given the deep symbiotic relationship between the two branches. We can also learn about Sicilian mafia groups in one location, like Castellammare del Golfo, by understanding what contemporary Sicilian mafiosi were doing in other towns or regions on the western side of the island.

The early Sicilian investigations are crucial in that they confirm 19th century mafia groups utilized a local structure near-identical to Cosa Nostra as we know it and maintained a provincial structure that facilitated coordination between different leaders within a given province and likely between provinces. The principles, rules, and manner of conduct in 19th century Sicily were highly formalized and consistent with later insights into the Sicilian and American mafias. The 1883 and 1896 Castellammare cases did not uncover the same level of detail as contemporary investigations in Palermo or Agrigento but still confirmed the organized, hierarchical nature of the Castellammarese group, its core operating principles, and their seamless cooperation with likeminded figures in other villages.

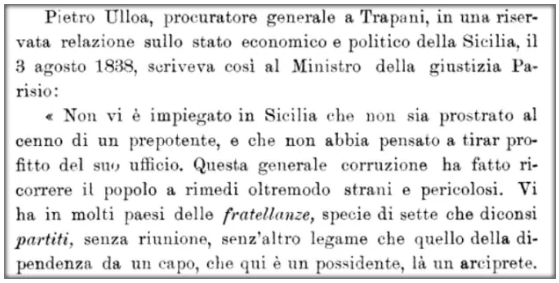

poichè vi sono due capi, il capo visibile ch'è Paolo Valenti inteso Naschino, ed il capo invisibile, l'elegante avventuriere Francesco Plescia. Finalmente è venuta la sen-

The 1883 Duke Calvino case revealed a hierarchy in Castellammare.

We can reasonably assume that positions like *sottocapo*, *consiglieri / consiglio*, and / or *capodecina* existed in Trapani in the 1880s and '90s even though it was not stated explicitly. We at least know that Paolo Valenti was regarded as the "*capo visible*" while Francesco Plescia was the "*capo invisible*", that several other figures were identified as *capi* of other Trapani villages, and that the broader Sicilian mafia was already structured and fully organized. This article makes no attempt to identify the ranks of individuals below the reported *capi* in 19th century Castellammare but the organizations described in 1883 and 1896 otherwise resemble the mafia as we know it, it being uncontroversial to conclude there was more to the structure than a boss alone.

The mafia's general existence in Trapani province was more or less confirmed even earlier than these late 19th century cases. An 1838 report published by Pietro Calà Ulloa, Attorney General of Trapani, observed groups referred to as "*fratellanze*" distributed in various towns throughout the province. This account has been cited in numerous international publications spanning the entirety of the 20th and 21st centuries but the earliest published reference to Ulloa's findings that I was able to discover comes via Michele Angelo Vaccaro's "*La Mafia*" from 1899, released over sixty years after the original report. All known citations of this report provide a simple summary that is lacking in specific detail beyond observation of the phenomenon itself but they consistently describe a distinctly mafia-like organization operating in Trapani province.

The Trapanese "*fratellanze*" were a second government separate from the legitimate municipal government of a given Trapani town and members of the group followed the direction of a local "*capo*". The "*capo*" could be a *possidente* from the town's upper classes or in some cases even a local priest. In addition to controlling local political elections, a town's *fratellanza* was noted for its ability to negotiate with cattle thieves on behalf of victimized ranchers and these men had influence within all of the town's classes. The group was influential enough to protect criminals or make accusations against the innocent and police were effectively neutralized. Witnessses were naturally unwilling to come forward to provide testimony even when a crime was committed in "broad daylight". This fraternal shadow government was obviously an early incarnation of what we today call "Cosa Nostra" but the full details of the report are unavailable, it not being known if specific names or towns were documented in the original account. The general summary is itself valuable and it is reasonable to assume the Trapani villages where the "*fratallanze*" operated were some of the same towns referenced throughout this article.



Pietro Ulloa, procuratore generale a Trapani, in una riservata relazione sullo stato economico e politico della Sicilia, il 3 agosto 1838, scriveva così al Ministro della giustizia Parisio:

« Non vi è impiegato in Sicilia che non sia prostrato al cenno di un prepotente, e che non abbia pensato a tirar profitto del suo ufficio. Questa generale corruzione ha fatto ricorrere il popolo a rimedi oltremodo strani e pericolosi. Vi ha in molti paesi delle *fratellanze,* specie di sette che diconsi *partiti,* senza riunione, senz'altro legame che quello della dipendenza da un capo, che qui è un possidente, là un arciprete.

Evidence of the mafia in Trapani dates back to at least 1838.

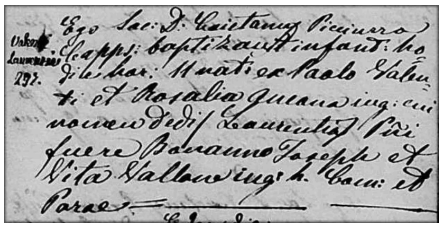
Joe Bonanno referred to the mafia as a "process" and this process has been documented for nearly two full centuries. A decade before Ulloa's 1838 report in Trapani, a similar investigation in western Agrigento documented an organization comprised of approximately 100 members distributed throughout the province and in addition to criminal activity, this group reinforced itself through ritual. Like the Trapani "*fratellanze*", the Agrigento organizations included members from the town's upper classes and even the priesthood. Though our knowledge of this investigation too is limited and only general summaries are available to us, it included towns like Cattolica Eraclea, Siculiana, and other Agrigento villages that played a significant role in the development of the Sicilian and American mafia. It can't be confirmed that the members of these earlier organizations in Trapani and Agrigento included lineages that continued into the latter part of the 19th century but the 1883 and 1896 cases at least provide ancestral links and other potential connections to 20th Century international mafia networks.

Continuity

While the bulk of the members named in 1883 differ from the 1896 case, there was continuity. A Giuseppe Bonanno for example was again named as one of the prominent members and in this case the nickname of "Peppe" was used. This could again be Joe Bonanno's uncle Peppe though he would have been around 22-years-old at the time and the Peppe Bonanno from 1883 was already someone of prominence. Age is not necessarily a factor, though, as Joe Bonanno says his father Salvatore became leader of their mafia clan when he was only 21-years-old and Joe Bonanno himself became boss of a large New York Family when he was twenty-six, there being many examples in the Sicilian and early American mafias of young men attaining rank. Unfortunately the age of this Peppe Bonanno in 1883 is not given in available information on the Duke Calvino kidnapping.

The Giuseppe "Peppe" Bonanno in the 1883 case might actually be Joe Bonanno's grandfather rather than his uncle of the same name. Joe says little about his grandfather in his book but heavily implies he was a powerful

mafioso in his own right, describing him as the clan's "leader" who would pass on his "power and prestige" to only one of his sons, his namesake Giuseppe being the one who initially inherited this role. Adding to the likelihood that the elder Giuseppe Bonanno was the Peppe Bonanno from 1883 is a striking revelation: Joe Bonanno's grandparents Giuseppe Bonanno and his wife Vita Vallone were the baptismal godparents to Paolo "Naschino" Valenti's child in 1878, making Bonanno and Valenti *compari*.



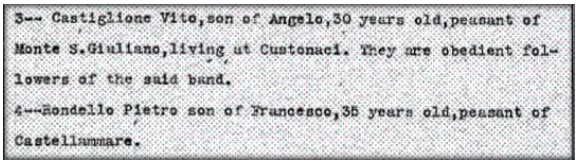
Joe Bonanno's grandparents were *compari* of Paolo Valenti.

Baptismal *compari* relationships represent a deep bond among Italian Catholics but take on greater significance in Cosa Nostra. Mafiosi often choose a *compare* because of an existing closeness within the organization or as a symbol of a new relationship, possibly even a political alliance or gesture of goodwill as with Felice Buccellato and Salvatore Bonanno. The Valenti baptism notes that Vita Vallone, Joe Bonanno's grandmother, was a parishioner of the church which complements Bonanno's story of his grandmother encouraging son Salvatore to become a priest and utilizing a relative in the church to facilitate his entry into the seminary. Giuseppe Bonanno "Sr." was deceased by the time of his son Peppe's 1894 marriage which rules him out from the 1896 case but there is no information confirming he had yet passed in 1883, five years after the Valenti baptism.

Giuseppe Bonanno serving as godfather to Paolo Valenti's child in 1878 adds considerably to the possibility that he was the 1883 "Peppe", as the Duke Calvino case showed this Peppe Bonanno to operate in tandem with Valenti. The nickname "Peppe" and its variants are common among anyone named Giuseppe, Joe Bonanno himself using the extended "Peppino", so it wouldn't be peculiar if both father and son used the same diminutives. For the sake of clarity, this article refers to the grandfather as Giuseppe, the uncle as Peppe, and the grandson as Joe given they all share the name Giuseppe Bonanno. Whether the Peppe Bonanno in 1883 was Giuseppe the elder or his son, the effect is the same and demonstrates that the Bonannos were personally close to Valenti both within the mafia organization and personally via the Valenti baptism. Recurrence of the Bonannos between 1883 and 1896 along with the baptismal relationship to leader Paolo Valenti is perhaps the most significant connection between the two late-19th century Castellammare investigations

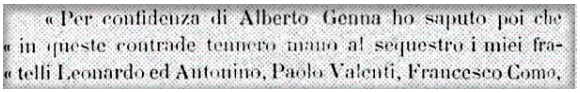
but there were other confirmed ties as well as coincidences that suggest further connection.

Two brothers named Francesco and Giuseppe Castiglione were identified in 1883, like Vito Castiglione from the 1896 investigation. Vito Castiglione was from Monte San Giuliano but Monte San Giuliano was one of the mafia districts identified during the 1883 investigation much as it was in 1896, Giovanni Pace reportedly the *capo* in this area during the former period while Castiglione was the head during the latter. Two Rondello brothers from Castellammare were also active in the Duke Calvino affair, Paolo and Felice, bringing to mind "association" member Pietro Rondello from the 1896 investigation. Girolamo Asaro's wedding to Rosalia Iracani in 1885 included a Francesco Rondello as one of the witnesses, the same name as Pietro's father.


3-- Castiglione Vito,son of Angelo,30 years old,peasant of Monte S.Giuliano,living at Custonaci. They are obedient followers of the said band.
4--Rondello Pietro son of Francesco,35 years old,peasant of Castellammare.

Castiglione and Rondello were recurring names in 1883 and 1896.

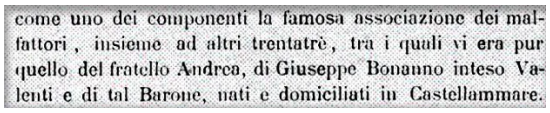
Other names involved with the Castellammarese group in the 1880s suggest potential connections to American figures. Alberto Genna for example was an influential member described earlier. Genna's underling Antonino Renda cooperated in the Duke Calvino case and although Renda was seemingly not a member himself, he and his brothers initially reported to Genna who appears to have been an initiated member or at least close to the leadership. A suspected Bonanno member in New York was Leonardo Genna (b. 1902) whose father in Castellammare was named Alberto (b. 1855). Leonardo Genna's wife was also the niece of Buffalo boss Stefano Magaddino and Leonardo's nephew James Genna was a confirmed Bonanno member, James having a brother Albert named for his grandfather. A Santo and Girolamo Genna were arrested in a crackdown on the Castellammare Family in 1987 along with men named Giuseppe Buccellato, Giuseppe Asaro, and Vito Bonventre, these surnames seemingly permanent fixtures in the local mafia.


« Per confidenza di Alberto Genna ho saputo poi che « in queste contrade tennero mano al sequestro i miei fra- « telli Leonardo ed Antonino, Paolo Valenti, Francesco Como,

The Genna name was present in Castellammare and New York.

Antonino Renda testified that he was reassigned to another mafia figure named Giacomo Spadaro at one point, which drew Alberto Genna's ire. The Spadaro/Spataro surname is itself significant in the Bonanno Family, Joe Bonanno's brother-in-law Joseph Spadaro being an affluent *alta* mafioso who

achieved success in legitimate society through the garment trade and maintained respectability through his involvement in civic organizations while maintaining formal Cosa Nostra membership. Another member in New York was Antonino "Nino" Spadaro, a cousin of Bonanno member Epifanio "Fani" D'Angelo who was born in Castellammare and related to the Asaro name. Nino Spadaro's family tree includes older Spadaros with the given name Giacomo. These surnames are relatively common in Castellammare but there is possibility of relation given the early mafia's even more pronounced tendency to pass membership through blood and kinship, the Gennas and Spadaros in and around the Bonanno Family perhaps descending from a known quantity in Castellammarese mafia history.


come uno dei componenti la famosa associazione dei malfattori, insieme ad altri trentatrè, tra i quali vi era pur quello del fratello Andrea, di Giuseppe Bonanno inteso Valenti e di tal Barone, nati e domiciliati in Castellammare.

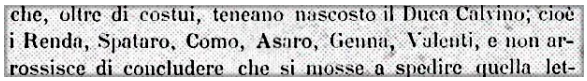
Bonanno and Valenti were both significant figures in 1883.

Giambattista Tartamella was an alleged participant in the Duke Calvino affair and was one of the men who reportedly confessed against his will. Joe Bonanno's longtime *consigliere* was Giovanni "John" Tartamella, whose son and nephew each held the position of *capodecina* under the leadership of early 1970s Bonanno boss Natale Evola, another *compaesano* (townsman) who once reported to a crew direct with John Tartamella. A Domenico "Mimmo" Tartamella was a Castellammare-born Bonanno associate active with the Family's Sicilian faction during the 1970s as well, Mimmo associating with many other Castellammarese mafiosi in Brooklyn and Queens who represented the second wave of Sicilian migration.

A business partner of Paolo Valenti identified in the 1883 investigation had the surname Puma, there being several Pumas from Castellammare involved with the Bonannos. Francesco Puma was a central figure during the early 1920s "Good Killers" case and a couple of other Pumas show up later as affiliates of the Family, including associate Felice Puma who operated with Mimmo Tartamella in the late 1970s. The unidentified Puma from the 1880s was active in the countryside around Mount Inici on the western side of the municipality.

An Asaro was brought up in the Calvino kidnapping investigation as part of the initial attempt to kidnap Baron Curatola in Salemi though unfortunately a given name was not included. Girolamo Asaro was twenty-six by then and thus old enough to be an associate if not member of the Castellammare group but Asaro is a common name in other parts of Trapani province, it remaining unverified if this Asaro was Castellammarese or from one of the other towns linked to these plots. A Barone was also mentioned during the case, the

surname of an elder Castellammarese mafioso who will surface later in close connection to both Girolamo Asaro and the Bonanno clan.


che, oltre di costui, teneano nascosto il Duca Calvino; cioè
i Renda, Spataro, Como, Asaro, Genna, Valenti, e non ar-
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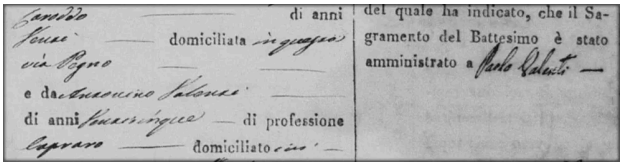
An unspecified Asaro was connected to the 1883 Duke Calvino kidnapping.

Andrea Valenti, brother of Paolo, was yet another mafioso identified in 1883. There was a bit of marital drama related to the Valentis, as a young man named Giuseppe Nobile intended to marry Paolo Valenti's daughter but his offer was rejected by the mafia leader, Valenti instead arranging for his daughter to marry one of the Rondello brothers. Like Antonino Renda, Nobile cooperated in the case though the defense argued that he was motivated by resentment over his failed courtship of Valenti's daughter. Paolo Valenti reportedly oversaw the Feast of the Madonna SS. del Soccorso in 1880s Castellammare, Valenti supervising both the "work" and "workers". The involvement of the Sicilian and American mafia in equivalent feasts and processions even in urban New York in later years is well-documented.

The Valenti surname has maintained relevance in Castellammare del Golfo, the acting *sottocapo* of the Castellammare Family in the 1990s and 2000s being Antonino "Nino" Valenti, his relatives also identified as current affiliates of the Family in Sicily. Paolo and Andrea Valenti from 1883 were the sons of a much older Antonino Valenti, Paolo born 1839 and Andrea the following year. Another brother, named Antonino like their father, was born in 1850. Paolo Valenti's 1839 birth record states his father was a *capraro* (goatherder), complementing the defense's stance in the Duke Calvino case that Valenti was not the seemingly educated, refined gentleman who watched over Calvino given his humble family background.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Valenti's father Antonino was a goatherder in 1839.

It's unknown what degree of relation, if any, might exist between Paolo Valenti in 1883 and the Valentis of the Castellammare Family in more recent years but their existence places the Valenti name atop the Castellammare leadership at least twice during a period of 120 years. Nino Valenti is now deceased but an investigation into the Castellammarese mafia of the mid-2010s revealed a rural meeting in which the leadership asked a favor of Valenti's son Calogero. A photo of Nino Valenti was displayed in a nearby barn with a candle burning

next to it during the course of the meeting, a highly symbolic, eerie tribute seemingly intended to show that the deceased Nino was watching his son's actions.

Andrea Valenti died in Castellammare in 1912 while Paolo died there in 1917, neither of them having been mentioned in the 1896 case. Paolo's son Antonino Valenti was born in 1864, the family living on *Via Ingoglia* at the time, and a daughter Vincenza was born in 1869. He may have had children named Lorenzo or Lorenza in both 1871 and 1878, the latter when Giuseppe Bonanno and his wife served as godparents, though I've had difficulty identifying what became of these births and the handwritten baptism records are written in barely-legible Latin. If the children did share the same name it indicates the one born in 1871 died prematurely. The name Antonino Valenti was passed on in Paolo's line and also may have continued through his brothers but I lack the resources to confirm the ancestry of the Antonino Valenti who helped lead the Castellammare Family in more recent decades.

There is additional reason to link Paolo Valenti with the future Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan beyond his baptismal relationship with Giuseppe Bonanno. For one, Valenti's wife was an Ancona and her mother was a Ciaravino. Ancona was the maiden name of Buffalo boss Stefano Magaddino's paternal grandmother and his mother was a Ciaravino, her sister also the mother of future Bonanno boss Gaspare DiGregorio. Interestingly, witnesses to the 1882 marriage between Stefano's father Giovanni Magaddino and his mother Giuseppa Ciaravino were Salvatore and Stefano Buccellato though it's unclear if this was the Salvatore Buccellato from the 1896 case.

Magaddino (pictured) and Valenti were both related to Ciaravinos.

Other Ciaravinos married into the Domingo family in Western Michigan and Illinois that produced famed Castellammarese War figure Sebastiano "Buster" Domingo, a Bonanno captain murdered in 1933 who was part of Joe Bonanno's wedding party. Joe Bonanno's illegitimate first cousin Giuseppe Silinonte was another mafioso from the Bonanno-Magaddino clan married to a Ciaravino, as was Bonanno's in-law Joseph Genovese of the Pittston and Bonanno Families. "Association" member Pietro Rondello from the 1896 case married a Ciaravino as well, this being noteworthy given the Ciaravino-related Paolo Valenti arranged his daughter's marriage to another Rondello in 1883.

Paolo and Andrea Valenti's mother was also a Caroddo, both Stefano Magaddino and his elder brother Gaspare marrying sisters named Caroddo. Another of these Caroddo sisters married possible Bonanno member Gaspare Bongiorno, whose son was initiated into the Buffalo Family under his in-laws the Magaddinos. Yet another Caroddo sister married Bartolomeo DiGregorio, the mafioso brother of Gaspare, who as stated also shared their maternal Ciaravino line with the Magaddinos. That Paolo Valenti and the Magaddinos were both so closely related to the Ancona, Caroddo, and Ciaravino names defies coincidence. Strangely, these surnames have produced no confirmed Cosa Nostra members despite their recurrence among female relatives of prominent Castellammarese mafiosi but it likely indicates older generations of these families produced respected members.

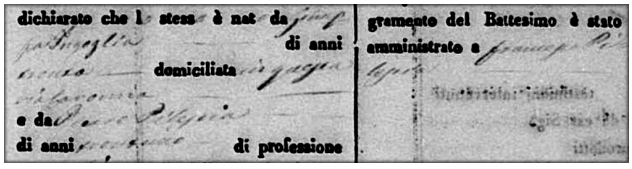
Paolo Valenti's baptismal relationship with Joe Bonanno's grandfather Giuseppe, the close association between Valenti and Giuseppe Bonanno at the upper ranks of the 1883 Castellammare Family, and Valenti's relation to the Magaddino-linked Ciaravino, Caroddo, and Ancona names could suggest Valenti was himself part of an earlier incarnation of this clan before it evolved into the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan as we know it. As the totality of this article demonstrates, relation within the Castellammarese mafia network was essential to the status of most mafia members from Castellammare del Golfo, especially among the leadership, adding to the probability that the obscure Paolo Valenti was related to other relevant families. The "invisible" *capo* Francesco Plescia is more puzzling, however.

Plescia is an *Arbëreshë* surname denoting Albanian ancestry that's typically found in communities of Sicilian *Arbëreshë* like Piana dei Greci, Contessa Entellina, Villafrati, Mezzojuso, and other select villages. Despite maintaining their own distinct ethnic subculture and religious practices, *Arbëreshë* Sicilians did play an instrumental role in the historic mafia and even within the Bonanno Family. Early boss Nicolo Schiro was *Arbëreshë* through his paternal side in Roccamena although it was his Trapanese maternal background in Camporeale that informed his mafia identity in Williamsburg. Even "pure" *Arbëreshë* from towns like Piana dei Greci became members and leaders early on in Sicily and the United States, though, showing that Italo-Albanian roots were not a barrier to mafia membership during the organization's known history.

The *Arbëreshë* are a distinct ethnic subculture.

Arbëreshë do show up in other Sicilian *comuni* outside of their core colonies but Castellammare del Golfo is not noted as having a significant population and the name Plescia is extremely rare in Castellammare, this being the only local family I've encountered with that name. Francesco Plescia was in fact born in Castellammare in 1842, though his birth record lists his surname as "Pilescia" and his sister Angela's birth in 1843 used the spelling "Pileccia". Records for his brother Vito's birth in 1851 record the name with the Plescia spelling. Their father was Pietro Plescia and I'm unable to determine where he was born but there is a high degree of certainty that he or his parents moved to Castellammare from one of the primary *Arbëreshë* villages in western Sicily.

Paolo Valenti apparently had a close relationship to familiar Castellammarese mafia clans but Francesco Plescia appears at a glance to be an outsider, a random *Arbëreshë* figure named as the secretive "*capo*" over a complex network of local clans, these relations and their implications constantly informing the mafia's internal politics throughout its history. The Plescias' maternal side however may provide insight into Francesco Plescia's place within the Castellammarese mafia: his mother was named Giuseppa Ingoglia, the same surname as 1896 leader Giuseppe Ingoglia. Francesco's brother Vito Plescia also married a woman named Bologna, the same name as Giuseppe Ingoglia's mother.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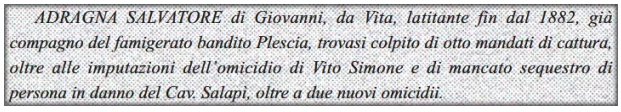
Francesco Plescia's mother was an Ingoglia.

The baptism of Francesco and Vito's sister Angela Plescia in 1843 identifies her godparents as a Vincenzo Ciaravino and Maria Bologna, showing further recurrence of these names and introducing the Magaddino- and Valenti-related Ciaravino name into the Plescia orbit. Though the surnames of Ingoglia and Bologna are historically common in Castellammare, they have

rarely surfaced in the local mafia. That the Plescias were closely related to both names opens the possibility that the 1883 and 1896 Castellammare bosses were relatives of one another and thus part of a clan that produced two successive leaders in the late 19th century.

Francesco's brother Vito Plescia had a son Giuseppe born in 1881 and daughter Tommasa born in 1894 who later married in Belmonte Mezzagno, Palermo, a mafia stronghold with ties to the early Gambino Family and Philadelphia. Vito himself died in Castellammare in 1913 but I'm unable to find a death record for Francesco Plescia in Castellammare del Golfo or elsewhere, nor evidence he married or had children. He was noted as having fled Castellammare during the Duke Calvino case and was still a fugitive during the 1885 trial, his name not known to have appeared again in connection with the local mafia nor have there been any other Plescias from Castellammare involved in Cosa Nostra.

Giuseppe Ingoglia's assistance with the "Adragna Gang" after the failed Zalapi kidnapping (Zalapi himself an *Arbëreshë*) in 1888 provides another link to Francesco Plescia, mentioned in brief in a previous section. The man Ingoglia harbored, Salvatore Adragna from Vita, was described during the investigation as a former companion of a "notorious bandit" named Plescia. This is a reference to Francesco Plescia, a top lieutenant of famed 1860s brigand leader Pasquale Turriciano, whose story overlaps with older generations of Asaros and will be detailed later. Turriciano's associate Francesco Plescia was known as "*Lo Greco*", a reference to Grecian elements of the *Arbëreshë* identity, and this group operated in the Baida countryside west of Castellammare like Giuseppe Ingoglia. Turriciano, Plescia, and their group had suspected ties to Castellammare's municipal government and successfully hid from authorities for nearly a decade while maintaining an image as "noble brigands", Turriciano taking on a Robin Hood type image among the peasantry.

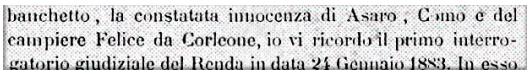

ADRAGNA SALVATORE di Giovanni, da Vita, latitante fin dal 1882, già compagno del famigerato bandito Plescia, trovasi colpito di otto mandati di cattura, oltre alle imputazioni dell'omicidio di Vito Simone e di mancato sequestro di persona in danno del Cav. Salapi, oltre a due nuovi omicidii.

Ingoglia's associate Adragna was connected to Plescia.

As seemingly the only Francesco Plescia in Castellammare and the only criminal one at that, the "notorious bandit" Francesco Plescia of the 1860s is certainly the man of the same name identified as the mafia *capo* in 1883. Salvatore Adragna's association with both Plescia and Ingoglia places the two men in the same criminal network in addition to their possible relation through the Ingoglia and Bologna names. Even with the relatively bare amount of information available to us, it's apparent there was a degree of

continuity and connection between the leaders active in Castellammare between 1883 and 1896.

The 1883 investigation was not only relevant to Castellammare and Trapani province's internal dynamics but included interactions with mafiosi from other parts of Sicily. A *campiere* from Corleone named "Felice" attended an underworld banquet held in Castellammare del Golfo in the early 1880s, the historic *campiere* role commonly linked to the mafia's genesis in the Sicilian agricultural countryside. A Ruvolo from neighboring Alcamo was also involved in a feud with a man from Corleone named Abbatello. Further detail is lacking but Corleone was and is an epicenter of mafia activity and though the Corleonese network was distinct from the Trapanese network in the United States, these contacts show that provincial mafia groups did not operate in a vacuum in western Sicily.


banchetto, la constatata innocenza di Asaro, Como e del campiere Felice da Corleone, io vi ricordo il primo interrogatorio giudiziale del Renda in data 24 Gennaio 1883. In esso

Corleone and Castellammare surfaced together in 1883.

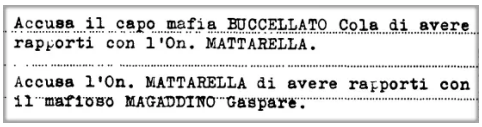
The co-mingling of mafiosi from Corleone and Castellammare del Golfo in 1880s Sicily signals that relationships and perhaps mutual recognition already existed within the western Sicilian network regardless of province. What defined the mafia was not simply internal to a single *borgata* or Family in a given town but the wider organization they shared throughout much of the island and then transplanted to the United States. The euphemism "connected" is often used in America to describe someone who is in some way affiliated with Cosa Nostra but it also perfectly defines what the mafia is: a network of highly-specific connections across time and place. This is especially true within an individual Family, where the membership is not only bound by criminal association, mutual assistance, and fraternal comradery but deeper personal and familial relationships that bundle the membership together over multiple generations as seen in Castellammare del Golfo.

The Buccellatos

Returning to the Castellammare membership in 1896, Girolamo Asaro and the Bonannos illustrate continuity between the 19th century Sicilian mafia and the 20th century American mafia, but the Buccellatos in the case also confirm continuity between the 1896 group under Giuseppe Ingoglia and later phases of the Castellammare Family. Martino Buccellato's brother Felice was Joe Bonanno's godfather and allegedly the future boss of the Family, as previously stated, but Dr. James Buccellato also informed me that one of Felice's sons was the later Castellammare leader Nicolo "Cola" Buccellato. Cola served as a

Family *capo* like his father and was also the *capoprovincia* of Trapani for a time.

Cola Buccellato was arrested in 1964 for mafia association and the following year he was identified by Italian authorities as a "*capo mafia*" known to associate with famed Castellammarese politician Bernardo Mattarella, a personal friend of Joe Bonanno who once greeted Bonanno during a visit to Italy. One of Bernardo's sons is current Italian President Sergio Mattarella and another son, Piersanti, was a Sicilian Regional President killed by the mafia in 1980. Bernardo Mattarella married a Buccellato, interestingly, but her relation to the mafioso Buccellatos is unconfirmed.


Accusa il capo mafia BUCCELLATO Cola di avere rapporti con l'On. MATTARELLA.

Accusa l'On. MATTARELLA di avere rapporti con il mafioso MAGADDINO Gaspare.

Felice Buccellato's son Cola associated with Bernardo Mattarella.

Bernardo Mattarella was identified by Altofonte *pentito* Francesco DiCarlo as an *uomo d'onore* (man of honor), the Sicilian mafia known to induct politicians as "*uomo d'onore riservato*" (reserved men of honor; members not readily introduced to the wider membership) and Mattarella had other relationships to relevant Cosa Nostra figures. The same report that references Cola Buccellato's relationship to Bernardo Mattarella also states that Gaspare Magaddino associated with Mattarella. Magaddino was Joe Bonanno's mother's first cousin who reportedly served as the Castellammare *capo* for a period before coming to New York in the early 1960s where he involved himself in the Bonanno war and was mysteriously killed in 1970. Like Giovanni Bonanno, Gaspare Magaddino also spent a period living in Tunis.

Francesco DiCarlo revealed that he was told of Bernardo Mattarella's membership in Cosa Nostra by Cola Buccellato himself who explained that Mattarella was proposed for membership by a boyhood friend named Magaddino, a likely reference to Gaspare Magaddino. Mattarella's relationship to the American side of the clan was not limited to his visit with Joe Bonanno in Italy, either, as Mattarella also visited the United States on one occasion where he was photographed with Joseph Spadaro, Bonanno's brother-in-law and an initiated member of his Family. Spadaro, mentioned in passing earlier in this article, may have come from a mafia lineage in Castellammare. Spadaro's public association with Mattarella was no doubt helped by the former's reputation as an upstanding citizen with involvement in civic organizations, Spadaro showing no outward signs of "gangsterism".

Mattarella (L) socialized with Spadaro (R) in New York.

Gaspare Magaddino's first cousin Pietro, elder brother of Buffalo boss Stefano Magaddino, was married to Cola Buccellato's aunt, Felice and Martino's sister, but Pietro Magaddino was killed in 1916 when the ongoing feud between the two clans reignited. A family tree provided by Dr. Buccellato lists the aunt in question as the wife of a D'Angelo rather than Magaddino but perhaps she remarried in the wake of Magaddino's murder given the couple was still young when he died. According to Joe Bonanno, the elder Stefano Magaddino, Pietro's uncle, was present during the murder but survived the Buccellato attack. A younger Giovanni Buccellato in Castellammare was killed in 1916 just before Pietro Magaddino's murder and a Pietro and Felice Buccellato were both killed in Detroit in 1917 followed by Giuseppe Buccellato in 1919 when the Bonanno-linked "Good Killers" hit squad led by loyalists of the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre faction carried out murders adjacent to the Buccellato feud in the United States. A Vito Buccellato was also murdered by the "Good Killers" in New York in 1913.

The Buccellatos killed in Detroit were first cousins of Don Felice and Martino, as was the Giovanni killed in Castellammare. Pietro Buccellato was in fact the son of Salvatore Buccellato from the 1896 case. The "Good Killers" case came to a head when Bartolo Fontana cooperated with authorities after murdering his friend Camillo Caiozzo in 1921 and revealed that Vito Bonventre and Stefano Magaddino, brother of the murdered Pietro and a cousin of Gaspare, were leading participants in the group along with future Detroit boss Gaspare Milazzo and other US-based Castellammarese mafiosi. Fontana lived in Detroit and Brooklyn after leaving Castellammare and attributed numerous murders between the mid-late 1910s and early '20s to the "Good Killers" in both locations. Some of the murders were unrelated to the clan feud but in addition to the Buccellatos who were targeted by the "Good Killers", Fontana claimed he was forced to kill his friend Caiozzo because the man had been involved in the Castellammare murder of Pietro Magaddino in 1916.

GROCER SLAIN IN VENDETTA

Three Men Attack Felice Bucellato on Orleans Street.

Detroit-based Buccellatos were killed in 1917.

The Buccellatos targeted by the "Good Killers" were all related to the Buccellatos from the 1896 case, as was Cola Buccellato, but the name and lineage is still present in the Castellammare Family today. The 2020 arrest of Castellammare boss Francesco Domingo identified an elderly Felice Buccellato as a current member of the Family. This Felice is a descendant of Giuseppe Buccellato, eldest brother of the Giovanni and Salvatore named in 1896. Dr. James Buccellato states that virtually all Buccellatos relevant to our research descend from a Felice Buccellato born in 1818, his name carrying on through future generations. Another Giuseppe Buccellato from the same branch of Buccellatos was a Bonanno *capodecina* and possible *consigliere* in Bushwick and Queens during the early 1970s, this Giuseppe likely made initially in Castellammare before spending time in Tunis prior to settling in Bushwick in the late 1950s.

Along with the recurrence of the name Felice Buccellato up to present day, other Martino Buccellatos have surfaced in the Castellammare Family, including one Martino Buccellato who was famously lured to his death in Palermo along with Salvatore "Toto" Minore in 1982. Dr. James Buccellato identified this Martino as the grandson of Joe Bonanno's godfather Felice Buccellato and a great-nephew of the earlier Martino. The younger Martino Buccellato's mother was also a Bonventre. There is no reason to believe the Bonanno-Buccellato feud persisted after World War II, if it even continued that long, but the 1980s pitted the Buccellatos against the dominant "Corleonese" faction that had overtaken much of the island and these Buccellatos were eliminated like many of the Corleonesi's enemies.

Another Buccellato killed in Sicily during the violence of the early 1980s was Castellammare *capo* Antonino "Nino" Buccellato, the marital uncle of Santo "Toni" Giordano, an influential member of the Bonanno Family's Sicilian faction in the 1970s and early '80s. The Giordanos were part of the Fiordilino clan and related to the Buccellatos through Salvatore Giordano, who married Nino's sister. One of Girolamo Asaro's daughters married a Giuseppe Giordano but his connection to these Giordanos is unconfirmed. According to Frank Fiordilino, Nino Buccellato traveled to the United States shortly before his murder where he was warned by Bonanno captain Cesare Bonventre not to

return to Sicily given the probability Buccellato would be murdered, Buccellato ignoring the advice and returning anyway where he met his violent fate.

Nino was a descendant of the 1896 Buccellatos.

Nino Buccellato was the nephew of Felice and Martino from 1896, being the son of their younger brother Giuseppe and therefore the grandson of Giovanni from 1896. Nino was also married to the daughter of Alcamo leader Vincenzo Rimi and was a suspected participant in the 1959 murder of Alcamese mafioso Stefano Leale. While many Buccellatos have suffered violent ends, Giovanni Buccellato's line was particularly cursed, his sons Felice and Martino both dying prematurely and his later descendants Nino and Martino murdered decades later. The Buccellato murders of the early '80s coincided with a low point for the Castellammare Family as it was temporarily forced to disband and its members reassigned to the neighboring Alcamo Family until eventually being given recognition as its own *borgata* again in the '90s.

The Martino Buccellato who killed Giuseppe Costa in 1896 was said by Italian investigators to be deceased by 1908 though he had disappeared from Castellammare over a decade earlier. His brother Felice's remark to Giovanni Costa's brother in 1897 about losing Martino could indicate Martino died not long after he became a fugitive in 1896. Though the exact year of death is unknown, Martino Buccellato would have been thirty or thirty-one at the oldest even if he died as late as 1908. The timeline of Buccellato's death potentially fits Joe Bonanno's description of the ongoing clan war between the Buccellato and Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre factions for control of the Castellammare mafia, members of both clans falling during the conflict as it came and went between the late 1890s and early 1920s.

Girolamo Asaro's association with this same clan of Buccellatos in the 1890s was not simply the product of random criminality in Sicily but proves he was intertwined with the entire mafia tradition of Castellammare del Golfo much as the Buccellatos' association with Asaro reflects the same of them. Beyond their collaboration in mafia affairs, one of Girolamo Asaro's nieces married a Buccellato and Dr. James Buccellato states that one of Felice Buccellato's

daughters married an Asaro, relation undetermined. However, there is no information suggesting the Asaros fell on any particular side of the Bonanno-Buccellato feud and evidence will be outlined later confirming Girolamo Asaro and his immediate descendants were equally close to the Magaddinos.

Many members are forced to walk a delicate line during mafia conflicts given the intricate web of personal relationships shared by even the most adversarial factions and this is intensified in Sicilian villages where the organization is even more tightly bound by blood, marriage, and *campanilismo*, blurring the in/out group distinction. The Bonanno-Buccellato feud was primarily between blood relatives of the two clans but Joe Bonanno identified Salvatore Maranzano and Gaspare Milazzo as non-relatives who lent their services to the Bonannos during the war while the Buccellatos were accused of recruiting bandits to carry out their dirty work, the front lines not limited to direct clansmen alone. There may have been unknown alliances at play between the town's various clans and other Castellammarese mafiosi who saw a political opportunity, too, but the recorded history of most Sicilian and American mafia wars demonstrates that most members are passive participants who take a stance only when forced and this was presumably true for historic Castellammare where Girolamo Asaro was not alone in having close relationships with both the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventres and Buccellatos alike.

Monte San Giuliano & the Giallos

Straying from the Castellammaresi, the men from Monte San Giuliano involved with the 1896 "association" represent an ongoing pattern and the 1896 investigation indicated that Monte San Giuliano had intimate involvement with the Castellammare Family just as they did in 1883. Though closer to the city of Trapani than Castellammare, the Baida *frazione* where the Castellammarese mafia congregated was once part of the Monte San Giuliano municipality and placed the group in closer proximity with Trapani's far-western *comuni*.

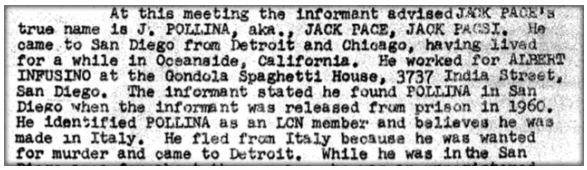
Interestingly, the Vario brothers of the Lucchese Family who Vinny Asaro and his father Jerry closely associated with in the Brooklyn-Queens area had heritage in Monte San Giuliano. Monte San Giuliano, today called Erice, had its strongest American presence in Detroit and Flint, some of these Michigan mafiosi eventually moving to California alongside Alcamese and even select Castellammarese mafiosi. 1950s San Francisco *rappresentante* Michele Abati was another major figure from Monte San Giuliano and married a woman from Castellammare del Golfo then later retired to Castellammare in the 1960s after he stepped down as boss. Before San Francisco, Abati lived in Erie,

PA, which was controlled by the Buffalo Family, known for its leading Castellammarese faction under Stefano Magaddino.

Abati had ties to both Monte San Giuliano & Castellammare.

Los Angeles Family informant Frank Bompensiero identified a San Diego-based member he knew as "Jack Pace" during his cooperation in the 1960s. Bompensiero thought the man's true surname was Pollina and believed he was originally from Trapani, first initiated into the mafia in Sicily, then fled an Italian murder charge and spent time in Detroit and Chicago before California. "Pace" assisted the Los Angeles Family with one murder alongside Biaggio Bonventre, an LA member in San Diego who previously lived in Michigan and came from Monte San Giuliano. Many of the men Bonventre associated with in Michigan were his *compaesani*, a sign that "Jack Pace" too was possibly from Monte San Giuliano given Bompensiero knew him to be from "Trapani" and he spent time in Michigan and California where he associated with a Monte San Giuliano native who followed the same trajectory.

Giovanni Pace was identified as the *capo* of Monte San Giuliano during the 1883 Duke Calvino kidnapping, "Jack Pace" being an Americanization of the same name. It's unconfirmed if Pollina was the California man's true name, this surname typically found in other provinces, nor is it clear where the "Jack Pace" name came from. "Jack Pace" absconded to the United States on a murder charge and was likely living under an assumed identity but it isn't uncommon for an alias to be derived from a family name or a surname that is otherwise personally or regionally significant. If "Jack Pace" or Pollina was a member initiated in the Monte San Giuliano area perhaps there is a connection to the older mafia leader from 1883.



At this meeting the informant advised JACK PACE's true name is J. POLLINA, aka., JACK PACE, JACK PACSI. He came to San Diego from Detroit and Chicago, having lived for a while in Oceanside, California. He worked for ALBERT INFUSINO at the Gondola Spaghetti House, 3737 India Street, San Diego. The informant stated he found POLLINA in San Diego when the informant was released from prison in 1960. He identified POLLINA as an LCN member and believes he was made in Italy. He fled from Italy because he was wanted for murder and came to Detroit. While he was in the San

Bompensiero believed "Jack Pace" came from Trapani province.

Antonino "Tagliaria" from the 1896 case was said to be from Monte San Giuliano as well though he was living in Trapani *citta*. His exact activities with

the Castellammarese group were not stated but he was described as a landowner, indicating he was from the *possidente* class. His true surname was likely Tagliavia but he otherwise can't be connected to known mafia activity outside of his inclusion on the list of 1896 mafiosi.

The Giallo brothers identified as "members" and direct participants in the Giuseppe Costa murder in 1896 were brothers-in-law of Vito Castiglione (b. 1866), described as one of the "chief leaders" of the "association" though he was from Monte San Giuliano and lived in neighboring Custonaci whereas the Giallos were in Castellammare. This description of Vito Castiglione could indicate he was the *capo* of Monte San Giuliano in 1896, much as the 1883 case identified Giovanni Pace in this role and mentioned other Castigliones involved in the Duke Calvino affair. Though intermarriage within their own *compaesani* was naturally more common among the Castellammaresi, there were occasional marriages to the kin of mafiosi in Alcamo, Trapani *citta*, and other villages throughout the 20th century, the marriage between Vito Castiglione and Maria Giallo an earlier example.

The Giallo brothers in 1896 were not simply conspirators but intimate participants in the Giuseppe Costa murder with Martino Buccellato and Girolamo Asaro. It was the Giallos who first attempted to lure Costa onto the Ingoglia estate by doing maintenance work on the property's mill tank and one of the brothers left a knife in front of Costa's home prior to the murder. They were also spotted in the vicinity of Costa's killing when it did finally take place. Vito and Vincenzo Giallo were identified in the investigation as the sons of Giuseppe, a likely match for the brothers showing their father to have been born in Alcamo though Vito (b. ~1859) and Vincenzo (b. ~1866) were born in Castellammare. Vincenzo married a woman named Adragna and they spent time living in Monte San Giuliano during the 1910s but I'm unable to determine Vito Giallo's whereabouts following the Costa case.

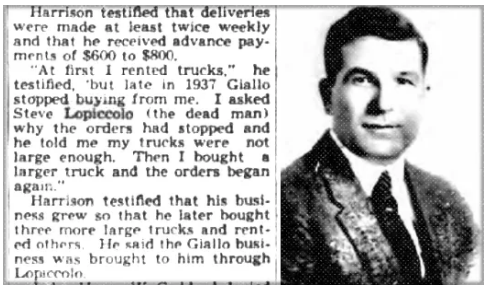
A younger Vito Giallo (b. 1889) from Castellammare was named during the "Good Killers" investigation for his involvement in the 1919 robbery-turned-murder of Rosario Brigandi in New York City along with his accomplice Antonino Curatola and the shooter, "Joseph Ales". The latter confessed to the murder and along with Bartolo Fontana provided an inside look into the Castellammarese "Good Killers" crew. "Ales" was actually Giuseppe Alese from Paceco, near Trapani *citta* and Monte San Giuliano, and his brother Pietro was identified decades later as an elder Bonanno member referred to as "Don Pietro Alese". Monte San Giuliano, Paceco, and Trapani *citta* are not common hometowns in the Bonanno Family but still part of the same network and it is

interesting a Giallo from Castellammare was again associating with someone from Trapani's far-western coast.

Within days of the Brigandi murder, Antonino Curatola was killed by their Castellammarese assocate Carlo Barbara, a surname shared with Alese's mother. Giuseppe Alese reported that Vito Giallo in turn died approximately one year after the Brigandi incident which helps pinpoint his identity. This Giallo arrived to his father Giovanni (b. 1860) on Mulberry Street in 1907 and remained a resident of the Lower East Side through 1917. Vito Giallo then moved to the Endicott Castellammarese colony in New York's Southern Tier after the Brigandi murder where he was employed by a shoe manufacturer and died of heart disease in 1920. His father Giovanni Giallo, the son of an older Vito, also established himself in Endicott where he died in 1942, his exact relation to the 1896 Giallos unconfirmed; he can be ruled out as a brother but may have been a cousin.

Another Vito Giallo (b. 1903) from Castellammare was a prolific bootlegger in Brewster, NY, who also maintained a residence in Brooklyn and ran an extensive network of alcohol stills throughout New York and into neighboring states long after prohibition ended. He was arrested numerous times but the most significant case occurred in the early 1940s when he was identified as the partner of a Paolo Palmeri in a multi-state bootlegging operation between the 1930s and early '40s in collaboration with suspected Bonanno leader Stefano LoPiccolo, who came from the Pioppo *frazione* of Monreale. Paolo Palmeri was not the prominent Castellammarese Buffalo member of the same name (b. 1892) who moved to New Jersey around this time, rather this was Vito Giallo's brother-in-law Paolo Palmeri (b. 1898), who was nonetheless Castellammarese and like Giallo maintained residences in both Brewster and Brooklyn. Palmeri was married to Giallo's sister Girolama.

The operation's supervisor Stefano LoPiccolo lived in Ridgewood, Queens, and was named in immigration records as a relative of early Bonanno member Salvatore Mangiaracina from Partinico, LoPiccolo's native Pioppo being dead center between Monreale and Partinico. In addition to his association with Castellammaresi like Giallo and Palmeri, LoPiccolo was closely involved with Salvatore Maranzano prior to Maranzano's 1931 murder and he was mentioned by both Nicola Gentile and Stefano Magaddino (on a 1960s FBI bug) decades later as a participant in high-level Castellammarese War matters. The association between Castellammarese figures and mafiosi from the Partinico area within the Bonanno and Trapanese orbit was not unique to this example and connects directly to Girolamo Asaro's story later in the article.



Harrison testified that deliveries were made at least twice weekly and that he received advance payments of $600 to $800.

"At first I rented trucks," he testified, "but late in 1937 Giallo stopped buying from me. I asked Steve **Lopiccolo** (the dead man) why the orders had stopped and he told me my trucks were not large enough. Then I bought a larger truck and the orders began again."

Harrison testified that his business grew so that he later bought three more large trucks and rented others. He said the Giallo business was brought to him through Lopiccolo.

A Vito Giallo worked with Bonanno leader LoPiccolo (pictured).

The Giallo name is not common in these circles so the recurrence of the specific name Vito Giallo between 1890s Castellammare and the early 20th century Bonanno Family is noteworthy. The Vito "Brewster Bill" Giallo active with Palmeri and LoPiccolo was the son of an elder Vito Giallo in Castellammare and Bill's eldest brother was Giuseppe (b. 1881), suggesting these could have been sons of the Vito Giallo from the 1896 case given he was the son of a Giuseppe and would have named his eldest son for his father. The second-eldest of Brewster Bill's brothers was Alberto, named for his mother's father, and Alberto Giallo's naturalization witness was their in-law Paolo Palmeri who was living on 21 Allen Street in 1926. The Vincenzo Giallo in Castellammare who married an Adragna and lived for a time in Monte San Giuliano had a son named Alberto as well, this being the aforementioned candidate for the Vincenzo Giallo from 1896.

Bill Giallo's 1941 arrest followed a string of earlier bootlegging charges that may have began in the 1920s. In 1929, a Vito Giallo of New York City was arrested for transporting alcohol in Berkshire County at the western edge of Massachusetts. Vito "Bill" Giallo's bootlegging operations later extended into Massachusetts as well as Connecticut, where Gallo was arrested in 1935. He ran a large still while living in Mount Vernon, NY, as well, where he had been arrested in 1931. The Massachusetts arrestee in 1929 was likely the same Giallo but another Vito Giallo (b. 1887) did live in Berkshire County, arriving to Pittsfield from Castellammare in 1907 where he lived through World War I before moving to Brooklyn by the 1920s.

As a former resident of Pittsfield living in New York City, the older Vito Giallo could have been the man arrested in Berkshire County in 1929 but he otherwise isn't linked to criminal activity whereas Bill Giallo was a career bootlegger who bounced between residences in New York City and Upstate New York while directing an interstate alcohol empire that distributed alcohol to Massachusetts and neighboring states. Adding to the probability that Brewster Bill Giallo is the 1929 arrestee is a 1934 bootlegging arrest in West Lebanon southwest of Albany which sits near the New York-Massachusetts border just fifteen miles from Pittsfield, this Vito Giallo explicitly named as

the Brewster resident. Even if the former Pittsfield resident was not the 1929 arrestee, the presence of a family of Castellammarese Giallos in Berkshire County in the early 20th century suggests Bill Giallo's connection to the area was not exclusively criminal but also familial.

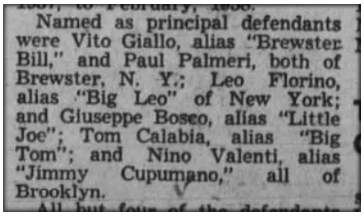
Brewster sits near the New York-Massachusetts border.

The names of Bill Giallo's associates during his earlier arrests provide little in the way of leads, these cases reflecting a fairly generic bootlegging network that included "random" Italians and even non-Italians. In contrast, the early '40s bootlegging case involved a wealth of intriguing names in addition to the operation's leaders. For instance, police arrested a young Vito Castiglione who was living on Allen Street in New York City, the same street Giallo in-law Paolo Palmeri lived on fifteen years previous when he witnessed the naturalization of Vito Giallo's brother Alberto.

Castiglione was described as twenty-years-old in 1941 and was the only arrestee caught at one of the group's alcohol stills. Castiglione reportedly entered the country illegally only fifteen months previous, making it difficult to trace his whereabouts before and after the arrest or pin down his full identity. That he arrived in the United Sates and quickly began working for Bill Giallo's alcohol operation suggests he had an existing relationship to one or more of the bootleggers. Monte San Giuliano mafia leader Vito Castiglione's marriage to the sister of the Giallo brothers from 1896 Castellammare and Bill Giallo's likely relation to them is a probable connection point between the young Vito Castiglione and Brewster Bill.

Other notable suspects in the early 1940s Giallo-LoPiccolo bootlegging operation were Giuseppe "Little Joe" Bosco, Nino "Jimmy Cupumano" Valenti, Stefano Ciaravino, Francesco Palmeri, and Bartolo "Bob" Giallo, the son of Brewster Bill's brother Giuseppe. Much as Bill Giallo and Paolo Palmeri had residences in both Brewster and Brooklyn, Bosco was from Castellammare and lived in Kingston and Brooklyn. Kingston sits in Ulster County significantly north along the Hudson, being halfway between New York City and Albany. A pair of Castellammarese Bosco brothers, Pietro and Giuseppe,

were killed in Detroit between 1918 and 1921, while another set of Boscos rose to prominence in Castellammare itself in the 1980s. The latter in turn were related to another Giuseppe Bosco from Castellammare who became an acting Bonanno leader in the early 2010s. Girolamo Asaro's mother-in-law was originally a Bosco, too.


Named as principal defendants were Vito Giallo, alias "Brewster Bill," and Paul Palmeri, both of Brewster, N. Y.; Leo Florino, alias "Big Leo" of New York; and Giuseppe Bosco, alias "Little Joe"; Tom Calabia, alias "Big Tom"; and Nino Valenti, alias "Jimmy Cupumano," all of Brooklyn.

Giallo's associates were primarily Italian in the early 1940s.

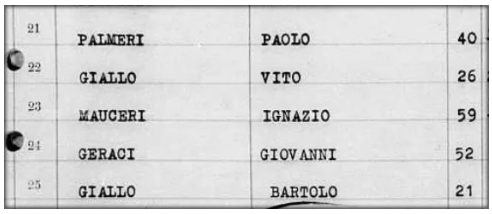
The Valenti and Ciaravino names were referenced in tandem earlier, 1883 acting leader Paolo Valenti being the son of an Antonino Valenti and Paolo marrying into a family that included Ciaravinos, this name in turn heavily linked to the Magaddino-DiGregorios and their extended relatives. The baptismal godfather to one of 1896 Castellammare boss Giuseppe Ingoglia's sons was also an older Stefano Ciaravino. One candidate for this younger Stefano Ciaravino was born in Castellammare in 1895 and lived in Williamsburg into the 1940s but his involvement in mafia activity is otherwise undocumented.

It is difficult to narrow Nino Valenti down as the identifying information in newspaper coverage of the arrests includes only his name and residence in Brooklyn. An Antonino Valenti born in 1905 was living in Bushwick in 1940 and gave his origins as "Trapani" while another Antonino Valenti of the same age lived in Williamsburg and came from Marsala. Nino Valenti's association with a Castellammarese mafia element in Brooklyn and Upstate New York that includes other connections to 19th century figures could suggest he descended from "the" Valentis but it is impossible to verify. In addition to his father sharing the name, Paolo Valenti's son Antonino was born in 1864 and Paolo also had a brother with this name. The name likely continued through this line of Valentis but the surname is common and any connection to Bill Giallo's associate is beyond speculative.

Some articles reference both a "Francesco" and "Frank" Palmeri as separate individuals involved in the 1941 case. Whether this was one man or two, it was presumably a close relative of Bill Giallo's brother-in-law Paolo. The Paolo Palmeri of Niagara Falls, who was likely initiated under the Bonanno Family in New York City before transferring to Buffalo where his brother Angelo was a high-ranking member, had a falling out with Stefano Magaddino around the

time the early 1940s bootlegging case was playing out and relocated to New Jersey where he associated primarily with Calabrian Genovese leader Guarino "Willie" Moretti. This Paolo Palmeri's father was named Francesco and he had a son named Frank who in turn married Moretti's daughter but there is no reason to suspect this Frank Palmeri, then a young man, was the one involved in the alcohol case. Bill Giallo's brother-in-law Paolo was the son of a Giuseppe Palmeri and it's possible he was a cousin of the Buffalo Palmeris although there is no evidence of association between them.

A 1936 arrival manifest confirms that Giallo in-law Paolo Palmeri visited Italy that year along with his nephews Vito and Bartolo Giallo, both in their twenties at the time. This Vito Giallo was the eldest son of Bill Giallo's brother Giuseppe while Bartolo was his younger brother. Bartolo was also the "Bob" Giallo arrested as a participant in the 1940s bootlegging operation. Palmeri listed his Brewster address on the travel manifest while the Giallo nephews were then living in the Bronx.



21	PALMERI	PAOLO	40
22	GIALLO	VITO	26
23	MAUCERI	IGNAZIO	59
24	GERACI	GIOVANNI	52
25	GIALLO	BARTOLO	21

Palmeri and two younger Giallos traveled overseas in 1936.

The manifest lists Paolo Palmeri and Vito Giallo in tandem but two older men are then listed between Giallo and his brother Bartolo: Ignazio Mauceri from Brooklyn (age 59) and Giovanni Geraci of "Philadelphia" (age 52). Geraci's address actually corresponds to Easton on the PA-NJ border, not Philadelphia, and vital records confirm he did live in Easton and came from Sommatino, Caltanissetta, a province that produced Cosa Nostra members in all three Pennsylvania Families. Mauceri was actually a decade younger than his listed age and lived in East New York where Girolamo Asaro's son Vincenzo settled around the same time. Coincidentally, Mauceri was from Santa Margherita di Belice, the same hometown as Asaro in-laws the Valentis who lived in East New York, these figures and their relationships to be elaborated on in detail later. Santa Margherita is in Agrigento but borders Trapani province and produced a handful of confirmed Bonanno members.

Traveling companions and especially relatives are typically bunched together on immigration manifests. This is not always the case but generally true. Mauceri's residence in East New York and heritage in Santa Margherita could have placed him in the Bonanno network and though there is no substantial

reason to connect him personally to Palmeri and the Giallos, or the Asaros for that matter, neither would it be entirely out of left field if he knew them.

Geraci is an odd fit. Sommatino did have a strong historic Cosa Nostra presence, though *pentiti* confirmed it formed an official *decina* in Grenoble, France, and Sommatino's population largely transplanted there over time due to Sommatino's deteriorating economy, but the town itself is rare in the American mafia. Caltanissetta province and Castellammare did intersect heavily in the Pittston and Endicott areas, the Castellammarese Joe Barbara a high-ranking member of the local Family alongside countless Montedoresi and Sancataldesi from Caltanissetta. Many Castellammarese mafiosi lived in or passed through Endicott in the developing years of the American mafia where they too mingled with the area's Caltanissetta natives.

I'm not aware of the Pittston Family having a formal presence in Easton, nor did Philadelphia, but Newark-based Bonanno member Antonino Riela from San Giuseppe Jato had business interests in Easton via relatives. Perhaps coincidentally, Giovanni Geraci and his family returned to Easton in 1950 from another overseas trip and on the same manifest was Colombo member Frank Profaci's wife and son; Profaci's niece Rosalie Profaci would later marry Bill Bonanno and the two families were close. Profaci's wife was originally a Castello from Villabate, the hometown of countless Colombo members including the Profacis, and Bonanno member Nicholas Castello's father was Villabatese, Nicholas's maternal line directly descending from early Bonanno boss Nicolo Schiro's own maternal line from Camporeale hence his Bonanno membership.

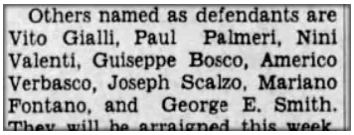
Easton was not a known mafia "outpost".

Mauceri and Geraci may have simply been random travelers who happened to mingle with their fellow Sicilians during the boarding process but arrival manifests are often fruitful in mafia research and these potential leads are

always worth exploring, tangential as they may be. The ship was traveling from Naples and most of the passengers' surnames represented other Italian regions so it is at least interesting two Sicilians were listed with Palmeri and the Giallos. Another curiosity on the manifest is that Paolo Palmeri claimed to have been naturalized in Baltimore but couldn't recall the date. Baltimore was a "dead zone" in the Castellammarese network, it being primarily associated with Palermitani who established a local Gambino *decina*, and I've found no records placing Palmeri nor anyone else from this network in Maryland.

A Thomas "Calabria" from Brooklyn, known as "Big Tom", was another participant included in newspaper coverage of Bill Giallo's early 1940s bootlegging operation. There were Thomas Calabrias in New York at this time though the Castellammarese heritage of many of the arrestees could suggest his true name was Calabro, an influential name that emerged in the Castellammarese mafia during the 20th century. Not all of those arrested in the 1941 case were Castellammarese nor even Sicilian, though. Americo Verbasco was among those charged and his name is glaringly non-Sicilian although he was related to Bill Giallo through Giallo's wife.

The Verbascos were from Corinaldo in the province of Ancona in the Marche region and their residence in Brewster predated Bill Giallo's presence there. Bill married Elvira Verbasco in New York City in 1928 and lived in Mount Vernon a short time later, his confirmed residence in Brewster coming in the 1930s. Perhaps he already had connections of his own in Brewster but his wife's relatives were well-established in the area. The Verbascos' northern heritage removes them from any kind of mafia tradition, likely even the analogous Calabrian and Campanian underworld societies, but Bill nonetheless employed Americo Verbasco in the illegal alcohol trade much as he included other relatives Paolo Palmeri, Bob Giallo, and presumably the illegal immigrant Vito Castiglione.

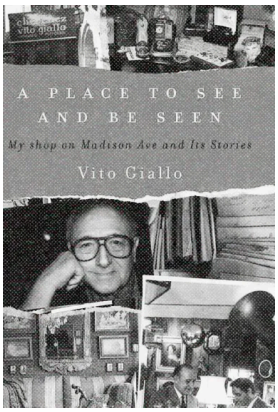

Others named as defendants are Vito Gialli, Paul Palmeri, Nini Valenti, Guiseppe Bosco, Americo Verbasco, Joseph Scalzo, Mariano Fontano, and George E. Smith. They will be arraigned this week

Giallo's associate Verbasco was a relative of his wife.

"Brewster Bill" Giallo continued producing large quantities of illegal alcohol into the 1950s and newspapers noted that he maintained an address in Brooklyn in addition to his home in Brewster. He was a major bootlegging figure in Brewster for decades and the Bonanno Family once had a strong presence in areas like Marlboro, Newburgh, and Wappingers Falls. Joe Bonanno and his uncle Giovanni Bonventre ran a farm in Middletown west of

Newburgh while *capodecina* Anthony Canzoneri and his family, heritage in Palazzo Adriano, operated a hotel in the Newburgh-Marlboro area. Canzoneri's *compaesano* Ciro Gallo, a confirmed Bonanno member, also married in Marlboro. The Family's primarily Agrigentino crew in New Jersey and Manhattan led by Giuseppe Colletti from Lucca Sicula and his brother-in-law Angelo Caruso from Enna province also maintained a presence in Marlboro County and were close to the DeCavalcante Family who had multiple made members living or staying in Marlboro for decades, these DeCavalcante figures all being Agrigentini.

In addition to Brewster and Brooklyn, Bill Giallo's one-time residence in Mount Vernon in the early 1930s is noteworthy as Girolamo Asaro's children temporarily lived in Mount Vernon during the preceding years and it was an atypical destination for Castellammaresi. Girolamo's nephew Giuseppe Asaro, the son of his brother Vincenzo, also married a Rosaria Giallo in Brooklyn. Her father was named Giuseppe but this was not Bill Giallo's brother of the same name. Bill's brother Giuseppe Giallo and his family lived in the Bronx by the 1930s and remained there into the 1940s. Surprisingly, Brewster Bill Giallo's namesake son Vito was a well-connected art dealer who assisted Andy Warhol early on during the icon's career and confirmed that his father was the career bootlegger in Brewster.



Brewster Bill's son Vito was a formative Warhol associate.

Bill Giallo died of natural causes in 1960 and was never named as a Bonanno member nor formal associate but the duration and scope of his bootlegging operations along with his partnership with the high-ranking Stefano LoPiccolo imply his activities were "on record". His Castellammarese heritage, apparent familial roots in the 19th century Castellammare Family, and his presence in Brooklyn place him in the immediate Bonanno orbit but his activity in Brewster was not far removed from Bonanno Family patterns either. The Bonannos had a long-term presence on both sides of the Hudson River northeast of Brewster, as described above, but they specifically had

made members living in Dutchess County who operated alcohol stills during the 1920s and '30s and these names hint at parallel connections to the 1941 case.

Vito Mule, Nicolo Guastella, and Giuseppe Trifiro were confirmed members working on behalf of Salvatore Maranzano's bootlegging operations in Wappingers Falls as the Bonanno leader gained local and national power. Mule was from Castellammare like Maranzano while Guastella was from Capaci in Palermo although his daughter would later marry Vito's son Prospect "Beau" Mule, who like his father-in-law transferred from the Bonannos to San Jose. Trifiro however was from Pioppo like Bill Giallo's partner Stefano LoPiccolo and later transferred to San Francisco in the 1930s where his father Stefano, brother Giacomo, and son Stephen also became members. Former San Francisco boss and FBI informant Antonio "Tony" Lima, heritage in Trabia, named all of the Trifiros as San Francisco members and reported that Giuseppe Trifiro was also a Cleveland member in the interim, possibly confusing this detail with brother Giacomo. Lima also stated the belief that Giuseppe was originally made in Sicily, indicating these rare Pioppo natives in the Bonanno orbit had roots in the Sicilian mafia too.

The Trifiros initially settled in Williamsburg after arriving to America and undoubtedly knew their prominent *compaesano* Stefano LoPiccolo in nearby Bushwick-Ridgewood. These relationships are practically a given for mafiosi from most Sicilian *comuni* but would have been even more relevant to a microscopic community like Monreale's Pioppo *frazione*. Perhaps the Giallo-LoPiccolo operation in Brewster, which was reportedly active throughout the 1930s, intersected with the Wappingers Falls operations given it was in Upstate New York and again included mafiosi from Pioppo and Castellammare.

Parallels existed between Wappingers Falls (L) & Brewster (R).

Apart from Giuseppe Ingoglia, the eldest mafioso named in the 1896 case was fifty-year-old Vincenzo Milano from Castellammare. I was able to find very little evidence of his existence although a Vincenzo Milano born in 1846 did arrive to Patterson, NY, from Castellammare in the year 1900. The arrival manifest stated he previously entered the US in 1898 and a son, name illegible, was already living here. Interestingly, Patterson is just north of Brewster where Vito "Brewster Bill" Giallo operated decades later.

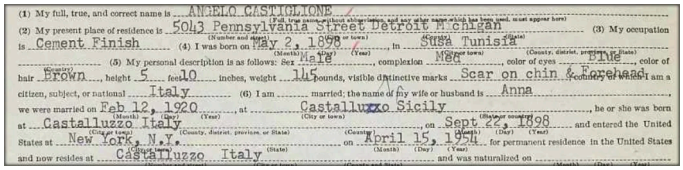
The Milano name is not common in the Castellammarese mafia network and Vincenzo's age is a perfect match for the man who immigrated in 1900. Perhaps Vincenzo Milano traveled to the United States in the wake of his legal trouble in Sicily though it's unconfirmed if the man in question remained in America indefinitely. His presence in Patterson long predates the activities of Bill Giallo in Brewster and Maranzano's circle in Wappingers Falls but may indicate Castellammarese mafiosi were already establishing themselves in these remote towns north of New York City even earlier. Much as the 19th century Castellammare Family embraced the more remote Baida countryside, some Castellammarese mafiosi in the United States took refuge in quiet rural areas of Upstate New York.

The Castigliones in Detroit

The only Vito Castiglione (b. 1921) I discovered whose age matches the one from the 1941 New York bootlegging case eventually settled in Detroit and was in fact the grandson of 1896 mafioso Vito Castiglione (b. 1866) from Monte San Giuliano and therefore the great-nephew of the Giallo brothers of Castellammare through his grandmother Maria Giallo. Vito and Maria's son Angelo Castiglione was the father of the younger Vito and Angelo spent periods living in Detroit himself. The 1896 mafioso was the son of an older Angelo Castiglione, the alternating father-son naming pattern of Angelo and Vito matching the Detroit Castigliones in addition to records confirming Angelo's full parentage as Vito Castiglione and Maria Giallo.

When Angelo Castiglione first came to Detroit from Monte San Giuliano in 1914 he was arriving to his father Vito who was already in Detroit though Angelo returned to Sicily where he married in 1920 and had son Vito in 1921, Angelo and his family remaining in Sicily through at least 1938. They were back in Detroit by 1942 where Angelo Castiglione ran a bakery that employed his son. Angelo's 1961 naturalization states he was born in Tunisia in 1898, indicating Vito Castiglione fled to Tunis for a time following his inclusion in the 1896 Castellammare case then made his way to Michigan. Tunisia and its formal mafia branch were noted earlier as a once-important node in the early Trapanese mafia network as both a destination and stepping stone to other

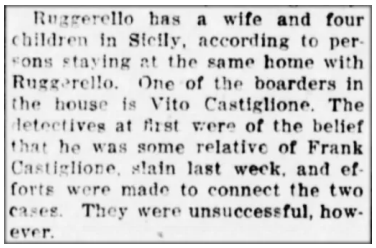
locations and Michigan was the primary destination for mafiosi from Monte San Giuliano, Vito Castiglione's appearance in both locations after leaving Sicily staying true to these patterns.


(1) My full, true, and correct name is ANGELO CASTIGLIONE
(2) My present place of residence is 5043 Pennsylvania Street Detroit Michigan (3) My occupation is Cement Finish (4) I was born on May 2, 1896 in Susa Tunisia
(5) My personal description is as follows: Sex Male, complexion Med, color of eyes Blue, color of hair Brown, height 5 feet 10 inches, weight 145 pounds, visible distinctive marks Scar on chin & Forehead
citizen, subject, or national Italy (6) I am married; the name of my wife or husband is Anna
we were married on Feb 12, 1920, at Castalluzzo Sicily, he or she was born at Castalluzzo Italy on Sept 22, 1898 and entered the United States at New York, N.Y. on April 15, 1954 for permanent residence in the United States and now resides at Castalluzzo Italy and was naturalized on

Vito Castiglione apparently passed through Tunisia after the 1896 case.

The Castigliones were directly linked to other mafiosi from Monte San Giuliano in Detroit. In 1915, a year after Angelo Castiglione joined his father Vito in Michigan, a Francesco Castiglione (b. 1886) from Monte San Giuliano was murdered in Detroit and a week later his *compaesano* Salvatore Ruggirello (b. 1877) was also killed, authorities linking the two deaths. Newspapers stated the belief that Francesco Castiglione may have been killed for providing information to police but it's unclear if there was substance to the claim. Ruggirello was described as a "member of the black handers" and an extortion letter was found in his possession when he was killed. His *compaesano* Francesco Bertolino was arrested for the murder and the two men were noted as having been longtime associates who served prison time together on a robbery conviction. A Vito Castiglione was living with Ruggirello at the time, as was the latter's nephew Tony Ruggirello. This Vito Castiglione was interviewed by police after Salvatore's murder but denied a relation to the murdered Francesco.

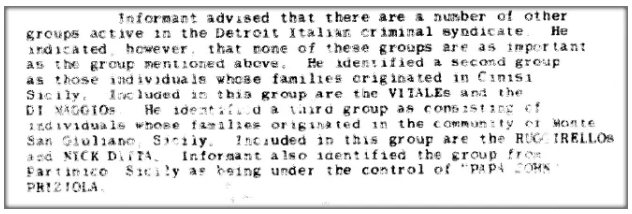
Francesco Castiglione may have been the younger brother of Vito Castiglione from the 1896 case as Francesco was also born to a father named Angelo Castiglione. The Vito Castiglione who lived with the Ruggirellos in 1915 was likely a different one born in 1896 who married Concetta Ruggirello. Like the older mafioso of the same name, this Vito previously lived in both Monte San Giuliano and Custonaci and though he denied a relation to the murdered Francesco Castiglione, a degree of relation presumably existed between the two branches. This younger Vito Castiglione was not the only link between the Castigliones and Salvatore Ruggirello, however.


Ruggerello has a wife and four children in Sicily, according to persons staying at the same home with Ruggerello. One of the boarders in the house is Vito Castiglione. The detectives at first were of the belief that he was some relative of Frank Castiglione, slain last week, and efforts were made to connect the two cases. They were unsuccessful, however.

The Ruggirellos & Castigliones were heavily linked in Detroit.

A Vito Castiglione claiming to be 40-years-old arrived to Detroit from Monte San Giuliano in 1904, heading to his "cousin" Salvatore Ruggirello. Though Castiglione's age is off by approximately two years these minor fluctuations in age are not uncommon in immigration records. Lacking an alternative candidate in this age range who came from Monte San Giuliano and can be placed in Detroit or elsewhere, this is likely the mafioso Vito Castiglione who was confirmed to be living in Detroit by 1914 when his son Angelo joined him. Whether Ruggirello was truly his cousin or he used the term loosely to refer to his mafia *paesano*, it provides further background for the Ruggirello-Castiglione relationship and confirms the two families were already connected in Sicily. Eleven years later police believed the same Salvatore Ruggirello's murder was linked to the murder of Francesco Castiglione and a different Vito Castiglione was living with the Ruggirellos at the time, these families evidently building on existing ties after settling in Detroit.

An FBI source in Detroit during the 1960s specifically named Antonio Ruggirello (b. 1897) as having once headed one of the "seven groups" of Sicilian mafiosi who came to America and established themselves in Detroit, the informant describing these groups in other interviews as factions of *compaesani* from different Sicilian towns or regions who spoke different dialects and each had its own distinct political identity in the Detroit Family's pecking order. In one of these reports he specifically cites Monte San Giuliano as the hometown of a faction consisting of the Ruggirellos and member Nicolo Ditta. Antonio Ruggirello was deceased by this time but three of his sons were by then affiliated with the organization.


Informant advised that there are a number of other groups active in the Detroit Italian criminal syndicate. He indicated, however, that none of these groups are as important as the group mentioned above. He identified a second group as those individuals whose families originated in Cinisi Sicily. Included in this group are the VITALEs and the DI MAGGIOs. He identified a third group as consisting of individuals whose families originated in the community of Monte San Giuliano, Sicily. Included in this group are the RUGGIRELLOs and NICK DITTA. Informant also identified the group from Partinico, Sicily as being under the control of "PAPA JOHN" PRIZIOLA.

The Detroit Ruggirellos were part of the Monte San Giuliano "group".

Nicolo Ditta was from Paceco, another *comune* adjoining Trapani *citta*, but many Monte San Giuliano mafia figures lived fluidly across different villages in the region so his inclusion in this faction is still appropriate. The Ruggirellos and most of the other Michigan mafiosi from Monte San Giuliano also had roots in San Vito lo Capo and other towns in the vicinity, the Ruggirellos citing relatives there in interviews following Salvatore Ruggirello's murder. Castellammare's mafia-controlled Baida district was referenced earlier as a historic *frazione* of Monte San Guliano, the latter once a more sprawling municipality that not only extended to parts of modern Castellammare but

included other *comuni* outside of modern Erice. As with Castellammare, the mafia environment of historic Monte San Giuliano was likely not concentrated in the small, dense "town" alone, which in this case sits on a steep fortress-like mountain, but was distributed throughout the municipality's wider territory.

A Ditta from Castellammare was the name of a fringe participant in the 1883 Duke Calvino kidnapping but a first name was not given. The Castiglione brothers in the 1883 case were similarly indicated to be from or otherwise associated with the Castellammare "*sezione*" (section) but available documentation of the case doesn't make it explicit who peripheral figures like Ditta and the Castigliones were beyond their fleeting involvement in the conspiracy. The Vito Castiglione from 1896 can be definitively linked to Detroit mafia circles and specifically his *compaesani* the Ruggirellos but even if the Ditta and Castiglione names in 1883 were coincidental they were part of the same formative Trapanese network that informed the backbone of these relationships in Sicily.

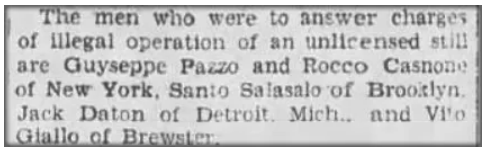
Ditta from Paceco was linked by an FBI CI to Monte San Giuliano.

The Castigliones' connection with the Ruggirellos confirms Vito Castiglione associated with the Monte San Giuliano mafia faction in Michigan, which once had numerous affiliates distributed between Detroit, Flint, and even Saginaw. Like the Ruggirellos, most of these mafiosi can be traced to San Vito lo Capo in addition to Monte San Giuliano. One record for Angelo Castiglione states he was born in San Vito even though his naturalization claims Tunisia, an indication that Vito Castiglione stopped in San Vito for a period following his residences in Monte San Giuliano and Custonaci.

Angelo Castiglione and his son Vito can't be linked to New York beyond port of entry. Both were living in Detroit by 1942 but young Vito can't necessarily be ruled out as the arrestee in the 1941 bootlegging case with "Brewster Bill" Giallo in New York State. Vito Castiglione, who also used the nickname "Bill", was the great-nephew of 1896 mafioso Vito Giallo and there are indications "Brewster Bill" Giallo was Vito's son, which would make Bill Castiglione's father

a first cousin of Bill Giallo. The description of Castiglione's illegal entry fifteen months before his 1941 arrest complements the Detroit Castigliones who were still living in Sicily as of 1938, Bill Castiglione's entry into the country not otherwise documented and seemingly occurring around the same general period.

An earlier arrest confirms Bill Giallo had existing ties to at least one Detroit figure. One of the men he was detained with in the 1934 West Lebanon alcohol case was a "Jack Daton", said to be from Detroit. The other arrestees were Italians from New York, it being unclear if "Daton" was the man's true name, an alias, or how he became involved in an Italian-centric bootlegging operation outside of Albany, New York. Bill Castiglione was not yet in the country in 1934 but his father, grandfather, and other relatives had been in Detroit on-and-off since shortly after the turn of the century and Bill Giallo presumably maintained contact with his Castiglione relatives in Detroit and Sicily which in turn may have provided a connection to "Daton". As for Bill Castiglione himself, perhaps he spent a short period in New York upon arrival where he worked for Bill Giallo's bootlegging operation then joined his father in Detroit the year following his arrest.


The men who were to answer charges of illegal operation of an unlicensed still are Guyseppe Pazzo and Rocco Casnone of New York, Santo Salasalo of Brooklyn, Jack Daton of Detroit, Mich., and Vito Giallo of Brewster.

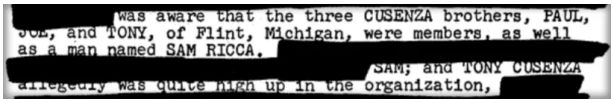
"Daton" of Detroit was involved with Brewster Bill in an Albany still.

The young Vito "Bill" Castiglione's parents returned to Sicily again after residing in Detroit during the early 1940s, Angelo Castiglione's 1961 naturalization stating he and his wife intended to live as permanent American citizens following their 1954 arrival back in Michigan. Angelo and his wife were then residing in Castelluzzo between San Vito lo Capo and Custonaci before again leaving Sicily, adding another location to the family's varied Trapanese geography. Angelo's mafioso father Vito would have been nearing 90-years-old in the mid-1950s and was presumably deceased, his trajectory uncertain in the years before his death.

Angelo's father was likely the similarly-aged man of the same name who arrived to Salvatore Ruggirello in 1904 but his initial stay was seemingly brief. The following year a Vito Castiglione of the same age again came to Detroit from Monte San Giuliano listing a different cousin, name illegible, as his arrival contact. His stay may have been continuous from there as Castiglione was living in Detroit circa 1914 when he was joined by son Angelo. Like his son, Vito Castiglione returned to Sicily after the mid-1910s but was again back in

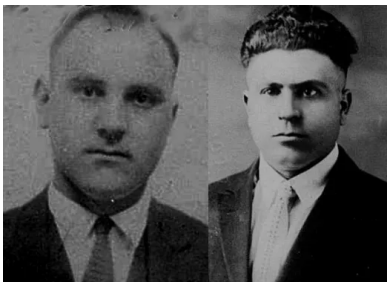
Detroit in 1921, this time listing his wife Maria Giallo as his departure contact in Trapani *citta* and arriving to another son named Giuseppe who already lived in Detroit. He arrived this time with 15-year-old Rocco Ruggirello from Monte San Giuliano, who was heading to his father Antonino.

The murders of Francesco Castiglione and Salvatore Ruggirello in 1915 were only two episodes of violence involving the Monte San Giuliano group, this network of *compaesani* being linked to other underworld warfare across Michigan in the late 1910s and 1920s, particularly in Flint. San Jose member Peter Misuraca spent his childhood in Flint where his older brothers were part of a vicious faction led by Antonino "Tony" Cusenza from Monte San Giuliano and San Vito lo Capo. The Misuracas were from Giardinello, near other Michigan-linked Palermo towns that border Trapani, but many of the Misuracas' associates were from Trapani province, specifically Monte San Giuliano and San Vito lo Capo. Notable murders included the accidental slaying of Misuraca's brother Salvatore by his own associates in 1919 and Tony Cusenza's eventual murder in 1929.


was aware that the three CUSENZA brothers, PAUL, JOE, and TONY, of Flint, Michigan, were members, as well as a man named SAM RICCA.
SAM; and TONY CUSENZA allegedly was quite high up in the organization,

Misuraca identified early Trapanese members in the Flint area.

The youngest Misuraca was not made until moving to California decades later, his older brothers John and Arturo already having established themselves as Colombo members in New Jersey, but he told the FBI that a number of the Trapanese figures his brothers associated with in Flint during the 1910s and '20s were "members". Tony Cusenza's brothers Giuseppe and Pietro were among them, as was Salvatore Ricca from Mazara del Vallo, the latter murdered in 1946. Tony Cusenza ran a mutual aid society for his *compaesani* from San Vito lo Capo, these clubs commonly linked to the mafia throughout the United States, and he was said to be actively recruiting new members into the club in Saginaw when he was killed. Giuseppe Cusenza moved to San Jose like Peter Misuraca, transferring his membership and becoming a *capodecina* before his death in a 1961 car accident while Pietro Cusenza settled in Detroit where he remained until his natural passing in the 1940s.

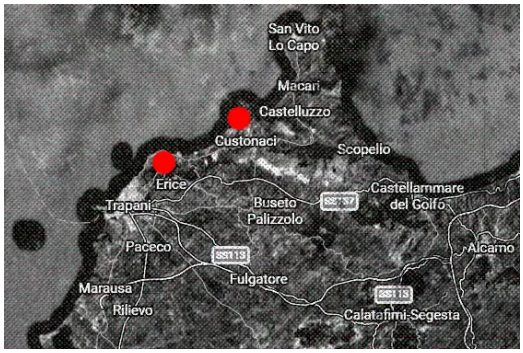


Joe (L) & Peter (R) Cusenza were once active in Flint and Detroit.

Much as they can be connected to the Ruggirellos on multiple fronts, there are several potential ties between the Castigliones and Cusenzas. When Vito Castiglione arrived back to Detroit in 1921 with Rocco Ruggirello, a man originally scheduled to accompany them was 22-year-old Leonardo Cusenza from Monte San Giuliano although he did not ultimately travel. The Cusenza brothers of Michigan and San Jose were the sons of an older Leonardo Cusenza and all three had sons named Leonardo, Giuseppe Cusenza's son of that name later joining the San Jose Family.

The Leonardo Cusenza who aborted his trip with Vito Castiglione in 1921 was too old to have been one of the known Cusenza sons and too young to have been their father. He may have canceled an earlier trip to America, too, as a Leonardo Cusenza of the same age was listed on a 1914 arrival manifest with many other Monte San Giuliano natives heading to Detroit, including a Girolamo Ruggirello. Cusenza's name is crossed out as with the 1921 manifest but it states he was departing his mother Marianna Vultaggio in Monte San Giuliano and heading to his uncle Giuseppe Cusenza in Detroit. The Detroit / San Jose member named Giuseppe Cusenza was married to a Giovanna Vultaggio, an indication this Leonardo was an older nephew and related to the mafia Cusenzas through both the Cusenza and Vultaggio names. The Castigliones were related to the Vultaggio name as well, this being the maiden name of Angelo Castiglione's mother-in-law.

Vito Castiglione's grandson Vito, known as Bill, married a Mary Cusenza after establishing his permanent residence in Detroit during the 1940s. The bride's father was a Francesco Cusenza (b. 1888/89) from Monte San Giuliano. Another marriage between the Castiglione and Cusenza names included an older generation in Detroit, a Giuseppe Cusenza (b. 1886) marrying Paola Castiglione in Custonaci before settling in Michigan. Francesco Cusenza's relation to the mafioso Cusenza brothers is undetermined but he shared his hometown with them and his daughter married the grandson of a well-connected international mafia member. The other Castiglione-Cusenza union appears further removed but its roots in Custonaci complement Vito Castiglione's residence there in 1896.



Monte San Giuliano (now Erice, L) is next to Custonaci (R).

Biaggio Bonventre, another "Bill", was referenced earlier for his association with the mysterious "Jack Pace", a mafioso believed by Frank Bompensiero to have been made in "Trapani" who spent time in Detroit before San Diego. Along with Bonventre's own association with his mafia *compaesani* in Flint and Detroit prior to Southern California, his mother was a Cusenza although she was born in Alcamo despite the Bonventres living in Monte San Giuliano and San Vito lo Capo prior to emigrating. Bonventre continued to associate closely with other members of Trapanese heritage, particularly Alcamo, even after moving to San Diego and transferring into the Los Angeles Family. San Diego included Trapanese members with Detroit links who belonged to Los Angeles, including *capodecina* Antonino Mirabile and his successor Joseph Adamo, both from Alcamo, but remote affiliates of the Detroit Family also lived there and frequently visited the area while maintaining Detroit membership.

A number of these early Michigan mafiosi from Monte San Giuliano and San Vito lo Capo were deceased or had left the state by the late 1940s but several younger Ruggirellos were initiated members who remained an artifact of this faction in Detroit for decades to come. The Ruggirellos provide their own web to untangle, however. The younger Ruggirellos' father was Antonio Ruggirello who was born in 1897 but Antonio had an older brother named Antonino who was born in 1895. "Antonino" is the typical Sicilian spelling and "Antonio" more common to mainland Italy, the use of each for two different siblings a confusing decision on its own but made worse by the tendency for American records to use the names interchangeably.

Much as Antonio had a brother named Antonino, he had sons named Antonino and Antonio in addition to Louis, the latter offering a moment of relief in the confusing web of recurring names. These three Ruggirello sons all became members of the Detroit Family. To differentiate themselves, Antonio and his namesake son went by "Toto", a nickname typically reserved for Salvatore, while Toto Sr.'s son Antonino went by "Tony". The elder Antonino and Antonio were sons of Giuseppe Ruggirello, the brother of the Salvatore murdered in

1915, and their grandfather was named Antonino; Antonio was presumably named for his maternal grandfather. It's unclear which of the Ruggirellos was the "Tony" Ruggirello who spoke with authorities after Salvatore Ruggirello's 1915 murder but given both Antonios used "Toto", it can be assumed that Antonino used "Tony" like his namesake nephew if indeed this was one of the two brothers.

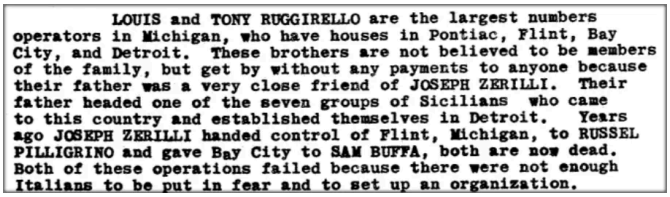
Antonio "Toto" Rugirello was an early Detroit power.

Complicating these relationships further is that Antonio Ruggirello's sons moved into his brother Antonino's home after their father's death in 1937, their uncle's name only a slight variation of their father's name. Antonino Ruggirello in turn died in 1950. The Detroit FBI informant who identified the Ruggirellos as members of the Family's "Monte San Giuliano group" specifically stated that the younger Ruggirellos' father once headed one of the Family's "seven" *compaesani* factions. Another FBI source, possibly the same one, similarly stated that the Ruggirellos' father had been a *capodecina* in the Detroit Family "many years ago", adding a formal rank to his role.

Peter Misuraca's belief that a number of Trapanese figures were made members under the leadership of Tony Cusenza in Flint during the 1920s suggests Cusenza was a *capodecina* as well, Flint and Saginaw providing an opportunity for a remote crew in addition to the distinct *compaesani* group he represented. His brother Giuseppe later held this rank in San Jose, these titles little more than an honorary gesture in the Bay Area Families but in this case perhaps symbolic of the Cusenzas' enduring reputation as mafia leaders. The younger Ruggirellos continued to supervise Detroit's scant interests in Flint even long after membership in the area dissipated, providing a trace of continuity between the early Flint group and their younger *compaesani* in Detroit.

Another influential member of this faction who emerged alongside the Ruggirellos was Rosario Pellegrino (b. 1902), another native of Monte San Giuliano. The FBI source who identified Toto Ruggirello Sr. as an early Family leader stated that Pellegrino was once given control over the Family's Flint interests by boss Joe Zerilli though Pellegrino's operations were unsuccessful

due to a lack of mafia infrastructure in the area. Pellegrino may have been another formal or de facto successor to Tony Cusenza or Toto Ruggirello Sr. though it can't be assumed that this element always had its own official captain by Pellegrino's time.



LOUIS and TONY RUGGIRELLO are the largest numbers operators in Michigan, who have houses in Pontiac, Flint, Bay City, and Detroit. These brothers are not believed to be members of the family, but get by without any payments to anyone because their father was a very close friend of JOSEPH ZERILLI. Their father headed one of the seven groups of Sicilians who came to this country and established themselves in Detroit. Years ago JOSEPH ZERILLI handed control of Flint, Michigan, to RUSSEL PILLIGRINO and gave Bay City to SAM BUFFA, both are now dead. Both of these operations failed because there were not enough Italians to be put in fear and to set up an organization.

Pellegrino & younger Ruggirellos had a later presence in Flint.

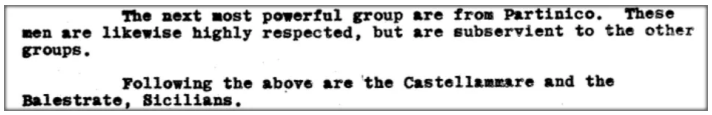
Despite the FBI informant identifying the younger Ruggirellos and Nicolo Ditta as members of the Family's Monte San Giuliano group, contemporary sources and FBI wiretaps of the Detroit leadership place the Ruggirellos as possible members of Michael Polizzi's crew by the early 1960s while Ditta appears to have reported to captains Tony Zerilli and Tony Giacalone at different points. Polizzi came from a mafia lineage in San Cataldo, Caltanissetta, but he married the daughter of underboss Giovanni Priziola from Partinico and the same informant who identified the Monte San Giuliano faction also stated that the Partinicesi under Priziola and Polizzi represented one of the Family's main political groups.

Partinico is near Trapani province and Partinicese mafiosi did attach themselves at times to the national Trapanese network, as seen in the early Bonanno Family. In addition to Polizzi, Giovanni Priziola's children intermarried with the Matranga clan from Alcamo who settled in San Diego but retained affiliation with Detroit. Outside of the Ruggirellos, the Priziola crew is not otherwise linked to the historic Monte San Giuliano group, though, and Ditta's possible membership in a different crew shows that these *compaesani* factions represented a common political identity that didn't always translate to formal crew assignments. Trapanese heritage persisted in some form through later generations but there were far fewer Detroit members from Monte San Giuliano and San Vito lo Capo by the 1960s so what remained of this faction may not have required its own formal representative even though the group's distinct identity was still observed by the informant into the 1960s.

In addition to citing "seven groups" with their own respective leaders, the same FBI source said the different *compaesani* factions in the Detroit mafia represented different leadership classes, or what he termed a "caste system". Terrasini was identified at the top of this hierarchy, the source referring to the Terrasinesi as "natural leaders" who ruled by fear. He didn't refer to them as

"Terrasinesi", however, instead referring to them as Favarottesi in reference to Favarotta, a historic village in the rural inland separate from the Terrasini marina. Favarotta was considered part of neighboring Cinisi until 1836 when it was joined with Terrasini, but the source explained that leading Detroit families from Terrasini like the interrelated Zerillis, Toccos, and Corrados were specifically from Favarotta and viewed themselves accordingly.

Terrasini sits directly next to Cinisi and the informant stated that Cinisi was the next most significant *compaesani* group after the Favarottesi. After the Cinisensi were the aforementioned Partinicesi. This informant made reference to this general class division in multiple FBI interviews, even applying it to Detroit's "sister" Family in St. Louis which included several of the same Palermitano *compaesani* groups. In one report about Detroit, he omits the Monte San Giuliano group but follows Terrasini, Cinisi, and Partinico with Castellammare del Golfo and Balestrate, stating the latter two factions are lower in the local pecking order than the previous three. Castellammare was absent among the confirmed membership by the 1960s when the informant made this reference and Alcamo is otherwise not mentioned by the source in his commentary despite the Alcamesi having a large presence in Detroit, the informant perhaps generalizing these neighboring Trapani towns as one entity.



The next most powerful group are from Partinico. These men are likewise highly respected, but are subservient to the other groups.

Following the above are the Castellammare and the Balestrate, Sicilians.

An informant noted the Castellammaresi as a lower caste in Detroit.

Though the informant applied this framework to the contemporary Detroit Family he was reporting on, his outlook on some of the groups may have drawn more from historic arrangements that continued to echo within the organization opposed to current realities. His remarks about the Terrasinesi, Cinisensi, and Partinicesi accurately reflected both the historic role of those groups and their influence in the present but the Monte San Giuliano reference could be perceived as random if one didn't know the Family once had an array of members and associates from this area, the remnants of this group still deriving their identity from this foundation. He may have meant Alcamo when he said Castellammare but this too could have a historic twist given there was a larger element of Castellammarese mafiosi in the city in the 1910s and early '20s followed by Gaspare Milazzo and his network influencing the Family until 1930.

The placement of Castellammare below Terrasini, Cinisi, and Partinico in Detroit's mafia class system would have provoked Joe Bonanno's ire, who

viewed his *compaesani* as its own exclusive caste within the Sicilian "Tradition". Bonanno was not deluded, as the Castellammaresi were an undeniable leadership class in the American mafia, producing mafia leaders in numerous American locations even when a significant Castellammarese faction was absent in a given Family, Salvatore Sabella's reign in Philadelphia the prime example. That the Detroit informant included them at all in the 1960s suggests there was a lasting impression but their ranking below the prominent Palermo towns indicates the memory of Gaspare Milazzo was distant and confirms that Detroit's internal relationship to Castellammare was more tentative than Families like the Bonannos and Buffalo where Castellammarese leadership endured for decades without interruption.

The key takeaway from this FBI informant comes not from splitting hairs but from the simple fact that he viewed the organization in these terms at all. Nicola Gentile refers obsessively to the hometowns of members throughout his memoir and he often frames the mafia's politics and factions around *compaesani* groups but Gentile was much older than the unknown Detroit source, born in Sicily, and transferred between the American and Sicilian mafias, these delineations still fresh within his network of immigrant mafiosi. The Detroit source in contrast appears to have been born in or at least spent most of his life in America and was reporting on the Detroit Family in an era when most American mafia groups of comparable size and influence were becoming increasingly removed from their roots yet he emphasized a much older, Sicilian-centric framework.

Gentile's story emphasized Sicilian *compaesano* politics.

Contemporary 1960s FBI informants in other cities made occasional references to Sicilian hometown connections and ethnic tension or inferred that these elements influenced the organization's politics but it was typically rare and fleeting if it came up at all. It isn't that these factors were entirely irrelevant to all of the groups in question, though, as this type of analysis required an informant with a highly specific perspective, there being many informants who can report on criminal relationships and general organizational activity but are not privy to nor interested in member heritage

and its role in Family politics. Still, many American groups were increasingly moving away from these roots and Detroit did represent an extreme example of Sicilian traditionalism in mid-20th century America.

In Detroit's case it doesn't appear more than a handful of non-Sicilians were ever inducted under Joe Zerilli's leadership despite Zerilli succeeding Cesare LaMare as Detroit boss. LaMare was from Potenza province in Basilicata but had been close to the Detroit Sicilians dating back to the 1910s, his status reinforced by contemporary Secret Service accounts placing him as a local underworld leader by the early 1920s. During this period he also witnessed the passport application of Michael Polizzi's father Angelo, a leading member from San Cataldo in Caltanissetta who also spent time with the Pittston Family, and served as best man at the wedding of rising Terrasinese star Vito "Bill" Tocco's wedding to Joe Zerilli's sister. LaMare was not an outsider in Detroit despite his heritage but did receive additional support from *capo dei capi* Joe Masseria, who was influencing a more liberal shift in the national mafia. LaMare served as boss for less than a year after Gaspare Milazzo's 1930 murder when he was gunned down himself in early 1931.

The rarity of non-Sicilians in the Detroit Family after 1931 does reflect Joe Zerilli's traditionalist approach but it was also a byproduct of Detroit's Italian population, which consisted of a much higher ratio of Sicilians in comparison to Italian colonies in other cities. Detroit did not have to navigate the extensive networks of mainland Italian criminals found in other parts of the United States nor was there as much opportunity for Detroit mafiosi to form pan-Italian bonds in their local neighborhoods, these clusters of Sicilian immigrants remaining fairly insular even though Detroit readily associated with non-Italian criminals. The ongoing relevance of Sicilian *compaesani* factions into the 1960s was a byproduct of this environment, these identities not diluted in Detroit to the same degree they were elsewhere.

In contrast, Philadelphia had a sizable Calabrian population and the local membership came to reflect this, Philadelphia informants separating the Family into "Sicilian" and "Calabrian" factions. Philadelphia once had its own separate sects akin to Detroit comprised of different Sicilian *compaesani* and despite these groups continuing to inform the later membership, the inclusion of non-Sicilians and specifically Calabrians resulted in a political divide that generalized the Philadelphia groups into "Sicilians" and "Calabrians" by the 1960s. Specific Sicilian hometowns became irrelevant in Philadelphia and the organization's politics were instead defined by the entire Italian region a member was associated with. In a much more concentrated environment like Detroit, "Sicilian" faction was a meaningless term and the

Family's Sicilians had the "luxury" of focusing on historic hometowns instead of banding together as "Sicilians" against a more glaring out group.

RUGNETTA in charge of Calabrian Faction and DENARO in charge of Sicilian Faction. Position of Consiglieri of Philadelpha Family,

Philadelphia was divided by Italian regions rather than Sicilian hometowns.

Nicolo Ditta's possible affiliation with Tony Zerilli places him direct with the Terrasinese boss's son, the younger Zerilli taking on added authority in the Family in the 1960s. Ditta's affiliation with Tony Giacalone provides a Trapanese connecton as Giacalone's father was from Mazara del Vallo though his mother was from Terrasini. The historic Monte San Giuliano group were no strangers to the Terrasinesi as the Flint group under Tony Cusenza included affiliates from Terrasini like Salvatore Vassallo and both elements coexisted in Michigan dating back to the turn of the century.

The FBI informant designating the Ruggirellos and Ditta as the "Monte San Giuliano group" shouldn't be dissected too heavily nor viewed in rigid terms as the commentary alone is interesting even at face value. Regardless of how these designations translated to the formal organization by the 1960s, it confirms *compaesani* identities were still a factor in Family politics and that contemporary members continued to reflect the living history of these groups. The Ruggirellos represented an element of the Family that traced back not only to their elder relatives but also the Cusenza faction. This Michigan contingent had an even deeper history in the mafia of Monte San Giuliano itself, Vito Castiglione establishing a direct link between the Sicilian and Detroit branches of this *compaesani* network.

Vito Castiglione was an elder mafia *compaesano* of both the Ruggirellos and Cusenzas, the 30-year-old identified as a "chief leader" in Monte San Giuliano in 1896 before arriving to Salvatore Ruggirello in 1904. Formal stature did not necessarily carry when a member moved between locations but reputation did and Castiglione should have held considerable influence among the emerging Monte San Giuliano group while living in Detroit even if he was no longer a "chief leader" as he was in 1896. He may have lived continuously in Detroit between 1905 and 1914 but sometime after the back-to-back murders of Francesco Castiglione and Salvatore Ruggirello in 1915 he returned to Sicily and this time lived in the city of Trapani. Vito Castiglione's close relationship to the victims suggests his own life could have been in danger, potentially contributing to his absence from Detroit until 1921.

Vito Castiglione & Factional Warfare in Detroit

Exactly when Vito Castiglione departed Detroit in the mid-to-late 1910s is unconfirmed but this period also coincided with Castellammarese violence. The Buccellato section of this article identified 1917 Detroit murder victims Felice and Pietro Buccellato as relatives of the 1896 Buccellatos, Pietro being a son of the Salvatore Buccellato charged with Vito Castiglione in the 1896 case, but the violence did not end in 1917 as Felice Buccellato's brother Giuseppe lived in Michigan too and was killed in 1919. Toto Ruggirello Sr. was one of the men arrested as a suspect during the initial investigation though charges were dropped and Buccellato's wife told police a day after the murder that Vito Bonventre, Stefano Magaddino, and Mariano Galante were responsible, this accusation occurring two years before Bartolo Fontana linked the same "Good Killers" to the Detroit Buccellato murders.

Fontana (pictured) echoed the account of Buccellato's widow.

The murder that sparked Bartolo Fontana's cooperation was the 1921 death of Camillo Caiozzo, which Fontana claimed to have carried out personally on orders from Stefano Magaddino in retaliation for the murder of Magaddino's brother Pietro in Castellammare five years previous. Fontana attributed seven New York murders, including Caiozzo, to what was termed the "Bonventre gang" and said the group was responsible for nine murders in Detroit. The murders in both locations follow similar patterns in that the Buccellatos and their allies were consistently targeted but the killings included other Castellammaresi and even mafiosi from other backgrounds.

Fontana's confession, though not infallible, demonstrates that he was kept abreast of Castellammarese mafia murders in different locations and was well-aware of the ongoing Bonanno-Buccellato feud but his cooperation also indicates the "Good Killers" spree was intertwined with local warfare relevant to the Families in New York and Detroit independent of internal Castellammarese politics. Along with the possible feud-related murders of Vito Buccellato in 1913, who may have been a more distant relative of the primary Buccellatos, and Buccellato relative Francesco Finazzo in 1917, plus several adjacent *compaesani* murders, he stated the "Good Killers" carried out the 1921 murders of Morello leaders Salvatore Mauro from Baucina and Angelo LaGattuta from Mezzojuso in New York City. LaGattuta was indeed shot that year but survived the attempt on his life though his *compaesano* Giuseppe

Granatelli was killed that year and was another murder Fontana linked to the "Good Killers".

The Morello Family was by then under Salvatore Loiacano from Marineo, who was apparently supported by national *capo* Salvatore D'Aquila, but former *capo dei capi* Giuseppe Morello and a rogue faction of loyalists were vying for control over Morello's former Family following his release from prison in 1920. Nicola Gentile stated that Bonanno boss Nicolo Schiro was ostensibly neutral in the early 1920s conflict but implied Schiro was politically aligned with the anti-D'Aquila element. For example, Schiro allowed Gentile to transfer into his own Family temporarily to escape a D'Aquila-issued murder contract on Gentile's Messinese friend Umberto Valente, a high-ranking Gambino member aligned with Morello. Fontana's story suggests Schiro's involvement was not merely passive or political but included dispatching the "Good Killers" to commit acts of violence on Giuseppe Morello's behalf.

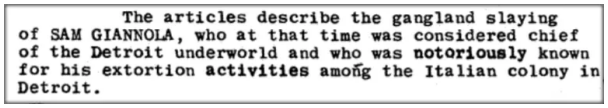
Secret Service member informant Salvatore Clemente similarly reported that Schiro had been aligned with bosses Fortunato LoMonte from Villafrati and Manfredi Mineo of Palermo against Salvatore D'Aquila in an earlier 1913 conflict, establishing precedent to Nicolo Schiro's alliance with Morello Family figures and his opposition to D'Aquila. Even if Fontana's understanding of these events was limited or partially inaccurate, his perspective is not entirely baseless and suggests the "Good Killers" used their tight-knit network of killers for more than settling feuds, lending their services as well to mafia disputes involving other Families and factions.

Schiro (pictured) quietly opposed D'Aquila.

Fontana's account of the Detroit murders parallels New York in that the killings intersected with both the Buccellato feud and a wider conflict within the Detroit mafia. The murders Bartolo Fontana attributed to the "Good Killers" in Detroit were as follows: Giuseppe Buccellato, Felice Buccellato, Salvatore Buccellato, Luca Sarcona, Pietro Bosco, Giuseppe Bosco, Antonino Giannola, Salvatore Giannola, and Andrea Licata. The Buccellato murders can be attributed to the Bonanno-Buccellato vendetta but as in New York some of

the other murders indicate the “Good Killers” were utilized as weapons in an adjacent Family dispute.

The Giannola brothers were from Terrasini, the same hometown as future boss Joe Zerilli and other Detroit leaders, and Antonino is widely believed to have been boss prior to his murder in early 1919. The full formalities of the era are lost but Salvatore Giannola, Antonino’s brother, led what remained of their loyalists prior to his own murder later that year as the Family descended further into violent factionalism. The Boscos were from Castellammare and became figures of some prominence in the Detroit mafia under Antonino Giannola’s leadership although Pietro Bosco was killed in 1918 and a month later his close associate and *compaesano* Luca Sarcona was himself killed, these events believed to be part of the local Family conflict.


The articles describe the gangland slaying of SAM GIANNOLA, who at that time was considered chief of the Detroit underworld and who was notoriously known for his extortion activities among the Italian colony in Detroit.

Giannola’s status in Detroit was recalled decades later by informants.

Pietro’s brother Giuseppe Bosco left Detroit during the war but was killed after returning in 1921. Interestingly, Girolamo Asaro’s mother was a Giuseppa Sarcona and his wife’s mother was Brigida Bosco, complementing the association between Boscos and Sarconas in Detroit though a relation to Asaro’s relatives with those surnames is unconfirmed. A different Giuseppe Bosco was also noted as one of the 1941 arrestees in Brewster Bill Giallo’s New York bootlegging operation alongside the young Vito Castiglione.

The Detroit murders of Pietro and Giuseppe Bosco may not have been entirely unrelated to the Bonanno-Buccellato conflict, however. Along with Fontana identifying the “Good Killers” as the perpetrators of the Bosco murders, the Buccellatos were in-laws of mafioso Giovanni Bosco (b. 1879) back in Castellammare, whose son Felice Bosco also affiliated himself with the local Family. Sicilian mafia historian Salvatore Lupo specifically identified Giovanni Bosco as a member of Felice Buccellato's “group” in Castellammare during the period the “Good Killers” allegedly murdered the Buccellatos and Boscos in Detroit. The Boscos and Luca Sarcona may have been killed in response to the larger Detroit mafia war playing out between the late 1910s and early ‘20s but intersection with the Bonanno-Buccellato war cannot be ruled out. That Gaspare Milazzo was one of the principal “Good Killers” leaders is intriguing given he moved to Detroit later in the 1920s and rose to prominence after having an alleged role in eliminating some of his Detroit *compaesani* years earlier.

RICH MAN SLAIN IN FEUD

Joseph Bosco, Detroit Bread Merchant, Shot 15 Times by 3 Men

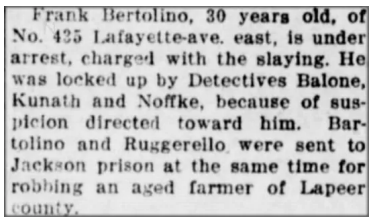
The Detroit Boscos were Castellammarese.

As with the national Castellammarese War of 1930-31, it can be difficult to separate national or even international conflicts from local disputes and the same is true for individual murders where motivations can vary from personal to political and often include elements of both. These situations are rarely black or white and a personal or local conflict can play into larger events, making it difficult to separate one from the other. Mafiosi often use an overarching conflict as an excuse to eliminate longtime adversaries and these personal issues conveniently interlock with political factionalism. Without an inside source with direct knowledge of a given murder it is near-impossible to determine the true motivation for many historic mafia killings and though newspapers and investigators occasionally had valuable leads their speculation was typically flawed, relying on entry-level theories like "racket wars" that overlook the finer details of mafia politics and the complexity of these relationships.

If indeed the "Good Killers" killed the Giannola brothers in 1919 it's unknown if it was an act of subterfuge, Nicolo Schiro again acting against the interests of Salvatore D'Aquila and his allies as he did in 1913 and 1921, or if this was done with the blessing of the American mafia's national government. The Detroit war would have been a top national concern necessitating emergency *Assemblea* meetings and intervention from the *capo dei capi*, Nicola Gentile's memoir describing this process during comparable events of the era, but no contemporary insiders have described what took place during the late 1910s and early '20s in Detroit. Neither can it be determined whether the Castellammarese feuds that initially brought the "Good Killers" to Michigan were entirely independent of the brewing war within the Detroit Family, these clan grudges potentially manifesting in local alliances.

Bartolo Fontana made no mention of the Monte San Giuliano mafiosi killed in Detroit just prior to the murders he attributed to the "Good Killers" but it confirms violence was occurring among relevant Trapanesi prior to the Buccellato murders and the elimination of the Boscos. Authorities believed Francesco Castiglione and Salvatore Ruggirello's 1915 killers were "Sicilian" but the motivation was unknown beyond unsourced speculation that Castiglione was a police collaborator and the arrest of Ruggirello's *compaesano* Francesco Bertolino in Ruggirello's own murder. Antonio Ruggirello was initially a suspect in the 1919 Giuseppe Buccellato murder attributed by both Fontana

and Buccellato's wife to the "Good Killers" which confirms some degree of association or overlap between the Castellammaresi and the Monte San Giuliano group in Detroit whether Ruggirello was truly a participant or not.



Frank Bertolino, 30 years old, of No. 425 Lafayette-ave. east, is under arrest, charged with the slaying. He was locked up by Detectives Balone, Kunath and Noffke, because of suspicion directed toward him. Bartolino and Ruggerello were sent to Jackson prison at the same time for robbing an aged farmer of Lapeer county.

Ruggirello's possible killer Bertolino came from Monte San Giuliano.

The affairs of both *compaesani* groups were intertwined in Sicily dating back to 1883 and 1896, Vito Castiglione's presence in Detroit alone providing a connection point. In addition to his collaboration with the Castellammare Family in 1896, Castiglione's relation to the Giallos provided him further intimacy with the Castellammaresi, the affairs of both groups relevant to him in Detroit much as they were in Sicily. His departure coincided with violence involving both of these *compaesani* groups and the Detroit mafia as a whole even if it was for unrelated reasons.

Giovanni Vitale from Cinisi emerged as a possible Detroit boss in the wake of the 1919 Giannola murders but he too was killed in 1920 and Vito Castiglione's return to Detroit the following year coincided with regime change. In 1922, the Secret Service learned that Ignazio Caruso from Salemi had "reorganized" the membership of the Giannola group under his own leadership, the organization reportedly including around fifty members at the time. Salemi is not present among later Detroit members but earlier Salemitano leaders in Detroit were brothers Vito and Salvatore Adamo, killed in 1913, and Salemi played a large role in the national Trapanese network, it being one of the mafia "districts" identified in the 1883 Duke Calvino case. The Boston *rappresentante* by the mid-1910s was Caruso and the Adamos' *compaesano* Gaspare Messina, a former Williamsburg resident closely tied to the Bonannos.

Leaders from Salemi surfaced in Detroit & Boston.

The Adamos were also directly linked to the Castellammaresi. Just prior to his 1913 murder, Vito Adamo was charged and tried with the murder of Carlo Caleca from Castellammare del Golfo who identified Adamo and Felice Buccellato as his assailants though the men were acquitted. Official ranks are unknown during this period but Adamo may have held a high-ranking position under Alcamese leader Pietro Mirabile, a possible boss prior to Antonino Giannola in the early 1910s. Mirabile's hometown of Alcamo was heavily represented in Detroit but there was apparently ongoing tension between Mirable and the Terrasinesi dating back to suspected leader Agostino Vitale in the early 20th century and continuing with the Giannolas into the following decade.

The Secret Service, though not privy to the full organizational structure, learned Antonino LaFata and Salvatore Catalanotte were two of Ignazio Caruso's top "lieutenants" in the early 1920s, these two men perhaps serving on Caruso's administration or holding the title of *capodecina*. LaFata was from Cinisi while Catalanotte was from Alcamo. The FBN would mistakenly identify Salvatore's brother Giuseppe Catalanotte's hometown as Salemi, the same as Caruso's, but this was in error and the brothers' heritage in Alcamo is confirmed. The Secret Service observed that key figures in Caruso's circle were from Terrasini, like Joe Zerilli, along with other relevant Palermo and Trapani towns that informed the later membership. Another prominent leader identified by Secret Service informants was Cesare LaMare, his heritage in the Basilicata region contrasting with his 1920s peers.

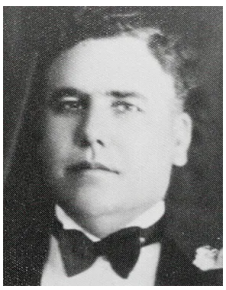
LaMare (L) & Zerilli (R) were influential under Caruso.

Toto Ruggirello Sr. was identified as a leading name in Ignazio Caruso's circle as well, his storefront a regular meeting place for local mafiosi. Ruggirello was indicted for the murder of Salvatore Brillati from Terrasini in 1921 but acquitted and the Secret Service accounts suggest he enjoyed increased stature under Caruso by the following year. If Vito Castiglione's absence from Detroit was in part to shield himself from internecine mafia warfare, the environment he returned to under Caruso was much more hospitable.

Gaspare Milazzo also moved to Detroit during the 1920s, further anchoring the Castellammaresi in Michigan. With the murders of the Buccellatos,

Boscos, and Luca Sarcona during the preceding years, it's not clear how significant the local Castellammarese membership was when Milazzo arrived after taking a short detour in California but his primary Trapanese associates were fellow Bonanno transplant Rosario Parrino from Alcamo and Parrino's *compaesani* the Catalanottes. Salvatore Catalanotte eventally succeeded Ignazio Caruso as *rappresentante* by the late 1920s but health complications resulted in his early passing in February 1930. Joe Bonanno confirms Gaspare Milazzo was in place as the Detroit boss in the months before his murder alongside Parrino that May. Milazzo joined Salvatore Sabella of Philadelphia and Sabella's relative Stefano Magaddino of Buffalo as contemporary Castellammarese *rapprasentanti* in their respective cities at this time, all of them familiar with one another and rooted in the "Bonanno" network.

The double murder of Milazzo and Parrino was reportedly intended to be a meeting of Family leaders held at a fish market but the two were set up and ambushed. Among other well-known names, Antonio Ruggirello was named as one of the would-be attendees of the meeting. There may have been both local and national motivations for the hit. *Capo dei capi* Joe Masseria, who had already eliminated Salvatore D'Aquila in 1928, was in conflict with Chicago leader Giuseppe Aiello from Bagheria who was in alliance with Stefano Magaddino and Aiello's *compare* Gaspare Milazzo of Detroit. In addition to seeking Aiello's elimination in an effort to gain more Midwestern influence via his own Chicago-based *capodecina* Al Capone, Joe Masseria reportedly wanted to install Cesare LaMare as the new Detroit *rappresentante* in Gaspare Milazzo's place. The tense factionalism within Detroit likely played a role too, the peace established under Ignazio Caruso giving way as different groups and emerging leaders fought for power.



Milazzo was the only known Castellammarese Detroit boss.

Multiple sources confirm Nicolo Schiro stepped down as boss in New York during the treacherous events of 1930. Joe Bonanno attributed this to a loss of nerve after Schiro was bullied into paying tribute to Joe Masseria, Schiro lacking the fortitude to stand up to the tyrannical *capo*. A Newark FBI source also believed Schiro was forced to pay tribute to the national mafia leadership but said Schiro specifically lost face due to his involvement in a San Francisco

conflict involving his friend Francesco Lanza, the local boss. Schiro lived in New Jersey during the 1930s and had strong circumstantial connections to the local Newark Family, which was disbanded several years later; what's known of this organization showing the Newark group to have a formidable element from Trapani province. Though he was no longer boss after 1930, in 1939 Nicolo Schiro traveled overseas with Detroit member Francesco LoMedico from Partinico, establishing a direct link between the former Bonanno boss and the Detroit Family's Partinicesi. Frank Bompensiero in San Diego told the FBI that not only was LoMedico a Detroit member, his brother Vito LoMedico was a member of the Sicilian mafia.

Masseria attempted to install Rosario Parrino's brother Giuseppe as boss of the Bonanno Family in Schiro's absence but this was rejected by the national Castellammaresi led by Stefano Magaddino and Salvatore Maranzano, who in Joe Bonanno's account elected Maranzano to head the Family following the murder of alternate candidate Vito Bonventre in July 1930. The murders of Milazzo and Bonventre were utilized by Salvatore Maranzano to justify the claim that Masseria intended to eliminate the Castellammaresi nationally, prompting the breakout of the Castellammarese War. Giuseppe Parrino was among the war's casualties in 1931, the Castellammaresi viewing him a traitor.

Rosario Parrino's brother Giuseppe (pictured) was a Bonanno leader.

Another Castiglione emerged in Detroit during the rise and fall of Gaspare Milazzo. Carmelo Castiglione (b. 1897) from Monte San Giuliano was killed in September 1930 as warfare broke out in the wake of Milazzo's death. Described in newspapers as an underworld figure who helped set up alcohol stills and provided bootleggers with brewing instructions, he was killed at his cousin Giovanni Castiglione's home and fired back at his attackers. Carmelo's father was Paolo Castiglione while his cousin Giovanni (b. 1895) was born in Custonaci to a father named Vito, possibly "the" Vito Castiglione given the mafioso was living in Custonaci circa 1896 according to the Giuseppe Costa murder investigation. A different Giovanni Castiglione (b. 1894) born in Monte San Giuliano, the son of a Vincenzo, died at age thirty-six less than two weeks before Gaspare Milazzo's murder though I can find no record confirming the nature of his death.

It's unknown if Vito Castiglione lived in Detroit throughout the 1920s and into the '30s. His return to Detroit in 1921 places him there when the Trapanesi gained additional power and his collaboration with the Castellammarese mafia in 1896 made him a veteran of the same Sicilian relationships unfolding among younger generations in Detroit. Toto Ruggirello's leading role under Caruso and rumored attendance at the 1930 meeting where Milazzo was killed complements the 1960s source who identified him as an early faction leader and *capodecina* while Peter Misuraca's FBI cooperation confirmed that his *compaesano* Tony Cusenza was operating contemporaneously as a leader in Flint. Castiglione certainly fit into this element of the Detroit Family but his son Angelo was back in Trapani throughout the 1920s and '30s which may indicate Vito too returned. If Giovanni was another son and Carmelo Castiglione therefore his nephew, the events of 1930 Detroit were directly relevant to the senior Vito Castiglione.

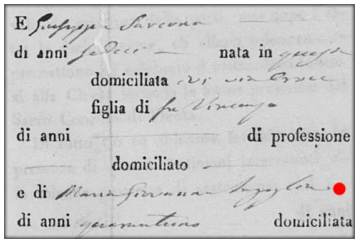
The appearance of a Vito Giallo and Vito Castiglione together in New York in the early 1940s and the Castigliones' presence in Detroit mafia circles during the preceding decades illustrates that the Asaros, Bonannos, and Buccellatos were not alone in providing continuity between the 1896 investigation and the American mafia, lesser-known names from the case even outside of Castellammare reflecting their own ongoing association with Cosa Nostra in different locations. That the Castigliones fell into a network of Michigan mafiosi from their hometown of Monte San Giuliano like the Ruggirellos and Cusenzas is no different from the relationships between immigrant mafiosi from Castellammare and their *compaesani* in New York's Bonanno Family.

Though these connections are exciting as a researcher, they are not altogether surprising. The Castellammarese clans were more heavily documented and publicly visible in both Sicily and the United States, their piece of the mafia's expansive fabric well-known, but the continuity they represent was in no way exclusive to their branch of the network and the American mafia as a whole was a macro representation of a process that played out near-identically among individual mafiosi and their *compaesani* regardless of which western Sicilian town they came from or where in the United States they lived and traveled. This tangential section on Detroit's mafia history serves to illustrate that Trapanese mafiosi from Monte San Giuliano and Castellammare del Golfo in Detroit connect to the 19th century Sicilian cases, too, and the same sets of relationships and their corresponding politics were relevant everywhere these immigrant mafiosi appeared.

The Ingoglias

Not everyone with the same last name is related even in the insular world of Sicilian mafia *compaesani*. Some of the names of 1896 "association" members do however show direct and indirect ties to members of the American mafia as well as later incarnations of the Castellammare Family, with even more potential connections lurking further in obscurity. That the group was helmed by Giuseppe Ingoglia and his son Stefano is curious as I've yet to see that surname among Castellammarese mafiosi in the United States or Sicily. There was an early Bonanno associate named Andrea Ingoglia along with a Newark associate named Anthony Ingoglia, the latter connected to Newark / Lucchese member Settimo Accardi from Vita, but both of these Ingoglias had heritage in Partanna and there is no evidence they were connected to Castellammare despite coming from the same province.

Giuseppe Ingoglia's mother was a Bologna and his wife was Maddalena Cascio. Though neither name has produced confirmed members in Castellammare, a previous section noted that 1883 boss Francesco Plescia was closely related to both the Ingoglia and Bologna names, his mother an Ingoglia and his sister-in-law a Bologna. Another potentially significant connection comes through Girolamo Asaro: his maternal grandmother was an Ingoglia and his wife Rosalia Iracani's own maternal grandmother was her sister, making Asaro and his wife cousins through their shared Ingoglia grandmothers. Joe Bonanno's uncle Giuseppe Bonventre married a Francesca Galante in Castellammare in 1910 whose mother's maiden name was Ingoglia and Giuseppe's brother Vito Bonventre would marry Girolamo Asaro's daughter Brigida, further intertwining the Ingoglia name with important Castellammarese mafia clans during these earlier eras.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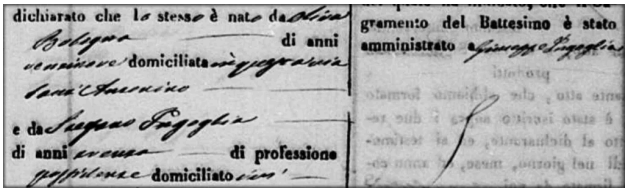
Girolamo Asaro's maternal grandmother was an Ingoglia.

Giuseppe Ingoglia's father was named Stefano like his son and the Ingoglia women in the Asaro tree were the granddaughters of an older Stefano Ingoglia which could suggest a common relation. In addition to the name Stefano, the name Vito Ingoglia is recurring in both branches, Giuseppe Ingoglia having both a brother and son named Vito. The extent of Giuseppe Ingoglia's relation to the other Ingoglias is unconfirmed but the surname shows up among the Plescias, Bonventres, and both sides of the Asaro family tree. The Asaro-related branch of the Ingoglias also intermarried with

Bolognas, opening up another range of possible ties between these prominent names.

As it stands, the Ingoglia name itself did not produce known Castellammarese mafiosi beyond Giuseppe and Stefano but some of these connections suggest the Ingoglias of 1896 were once relevant to the formative Castellammarese mafia's web of interrelation as one would expect from a Sicilian mafia leader. Giuseppe Ingoglia was born in 1846, his father Stefano Ingoglia listed as a *possidente* which places the Ingoglias among the higher classes in Castellammare. The Ingoglia name was once prevalent in Castellammare and appears to have historic significance, there being a street named V*ia Ingoglia* in town where some mafia figures once lived, including 1883 leader Paolo Valenti.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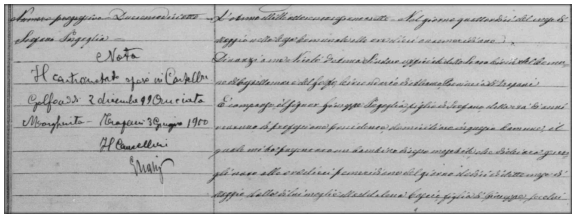
Giuseppe Ingoglia's father Stefano was a *possidente* in 1846.

The 1888 Zalapi case revealed that one of Giuseppe Ingoglia's brothers also provided assistance to Salvatore Adragna and his cohorts, suggesting the brother was associated with the mafia. Giuseppe had at least two brothers, Vito and Francesco. Vito Ingoglia was born in 1838 and Francesco may have been born in 1844 but died in 1862, ruling him out. The Ingoglias' hospitality toward the ruthless bandit group is interesting given the Ingoglias themselves were from an affluent background, not unlike their associates the Bonannos, yet provided material assistance to a group of seemingly lower-class criminals. The Ingoglias put themselves at considerable legal risk on behalf of these ruffians, too, as evidenced by the *Carabinier*i raiding the Ingoglia property in search of the fugitive group In October 1888.

Giuseppe's son Stefano Ingoglia was said to be 26-years-old during the 1896 Costa investigation, placing his would-be birth date around 1870, but his birth record confirms he was actually born in 1867. Giuseppe did have a son born in 1870, named Giuseppe for Maddalena Cascio's father, but this Giuseppe likely died as they had another son named Giuseppe born in 1879 whose godfather was a Stefano Ciaravino, the same surname linked to Paolo Valenti, the Magaddino-DiGregorios, and many others, as well as the same full name as one of Brewster Bill Giallo's later bootlegging associates in New York. The younger Giuseppe Ingoglia married an Anna Stabile in 1913, one of Joe Bonanno's early associates in New York being a Giuseppe Stabile.

Another Ingoglia son named Vito was born in 1888, married a Paola Catalano, and died in 1918 at age thirty. The cause of Vito Ingoglia's premature death is unknown and may not have been nefarious but the reignited Bonanno-Buccellato war was taking place around this time. A daughter, Antonina, was born in 1885 and in 1911 married a Carmelo Navarra whose mother's maiden name was Asaro, drawing back to Girolamo Asaro and his wife's shared relation to the Ingoglia name. Another daughter named Caterina was born in 1892 and married a Vincenzo Bologna in 1914, the Bologna name showing up even among younger generations of the clan. The youngest known son was Vincenzo, born in 1894, though he died in infancy.



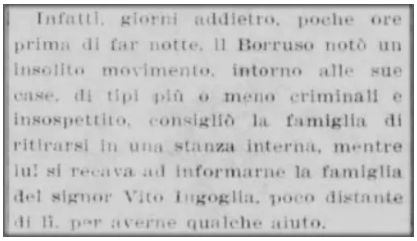
Stefano Ingoglia was born in 1867, not 1870 as the 1896 case indicated.

Giuseppe Ingoglia died in 1917 while still living in Castellammare and his son Stefano's trajectory in the local Family after the 1890s is undetermined. He was convicted in the 1896 case though he married a Margherita Cruciata in Castellammare in 1899. Cruciata is a variation of the name Crociata, shared by later Bonanno underboss Pietro Crociata and his Bonanno-affiliated cousin Francesco. Outside of Giuseppe Ingoglia assisting the Salvatore Adragna group in 1888 and Giuseppe and Stefano's identification as Castellammarese mafia leaders in 1896, Ingoglias have otherwise never been identified in available accounts of the Castellammarese mafia but it does not appear they existed in a vacuum, there being reason to suspect a degree of relation to previous boss Francesco Plescia and possibly their 1896 peer Girolamo Asaro. Adragna was an associate of both Plescia and Ingoglia, connecting the two men within the Trapanese criminal network.

The name of Stefano Ingoglia did surface again in one criminal episode during the early 20th century, but it may have referred to a cousin of the same name and he appears to have acted as a "Good Samaritan". The November 22, 1904 issue of San Francisco's Italian newspaper "*L'Italia*" reported the attempted abduction of a young girl who was staying with her uncle Giuseppe Borruso in Castellammare's Baida district. A man named Paolo Finazzo wished to marry the girl and after being rebuffed, Finazzo and his relatives plotted to kidnap the girl. After seeing suspicious activity near his home, Borruso contacted his neighbor "*Signor* Vito Ingoglia", a likely reference to Giuseppe Ingoglia's brother Vito. The Finazzos did ultimately storm the Borruso house and

abducted the girl but two Ingoglia sons, Stefano and Andrea, arrived on the scene and engaged in a shootout with the Finazzo group. This Stefano Ingoglia narrowly avoided being shot himself but the Ingoglias managed to hit one of their enemies, a man believed to be the brother of Paolo Finazzo. The Finazzos escaped with the Borruso niece but were later apprehended and the girl was found locked inside of a rural hut.

Interestingly, the Borruso name was among Castellammare del Golfo's noble families and Girolamo Asaro's first cousin married a Borruso, this connection to be outlined later. Though the episode appears to have involved Giuseppe Ingoglia's brother Vito and his own sons, one of which was also named Stefano for Giuseppe and Vito's father, it is still a significant event in the Ingoglias' story and the 1887 Zalapi investigation did note that one of Giuseppe Ingoglia's brothers was involved in his criminal activity, this perhaps being Vito. That Giuseppe Borruso contacted Vito Ingoglia when he initially suspected ill intent on the part of Paolo Finazzo may have simply been a function of their neighborly relationship but it's also possible that the Ingoglias' status as leading mafiosi played a role. Borruso may have felt that Vito Ingoglia was in a position to provide protection to his neighbors and indeed Ingoglia's sons did intervene with firearms in hand. Even if the Ingoglias' function as mafiosi played a role in their assistance, it is not evidence of ongoing influence in the local mafia itself, which by 1904 was a substantially different landscape marred by ongoing factional violence.

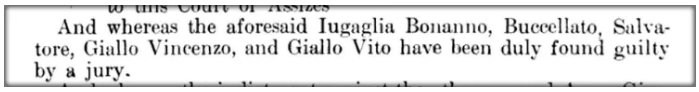

Infatti, giorni addietro, poche ore prima di far notte, il Borruso notò un insolito movimento, intorno alle sue case, di tipi più o meno criminali e insospettito, consigliò la famiglia di ritirarsi in una stanza interna, mentre lui si recava ad informarne la famiglia del signor Vito Ingoglia, poco distante di lì, per averne qualche aiuto.

Vito Ingoglia and his sons tried to prevent a neighbor's kidnapping.

Though it's never been explicitly stated, the war between the Buccellatos and Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventres came on the heels of the 1896 Costa case, suggesting organizational instability from the investigation and resulting trial in 1898 may have been a contributing factor. Peppe Bonanno and two of the Buccellato brothers were influential members under Ingoglia but came to represent two rival factions by the end of the decade and violence ensued. Joe Bonanno was aware of his uncle Peppe's incarceration until 1899 but overlooked or wasn't aware of the broader impact of the 1896 case, attributing the conflict with the Buccellatos to petty accusations and paranoia when in fact deeper changes were unsettling the local mafia environment during that exact timeframe. Perhaps these legal troubles resulted in Giuseppe Ingoglia

stepping down as leader and a leadership vacuum contributed to the violence in addition to personal issues between the Bonanno and Buccellato clans.

Along with Peppe Bonanno, Joe Bonanno states that his great-uncle Stefano Magaddino was incarcerated in the late 1890s and that their clan blamed the Buccellatos for Peppe and Magaddino's prison sentence. Bonanno's relatives believed Felice Buccellato "schemed" to get the two men jailed, even bribing a law enforcement officer to help with the conspiracy. Peppe Bonanno was indeed convicted in the 1896 case but so was Felice Buccellato's uncle Salvatore, making it unlikely the Buccellato clan deliberately "orchestrated" the outcome if indeed this was the same case Joe Bonanno was referring to. The elder Stefano Magaddino was not named in the 1896 investigation but it's possible an adjacent case targeted him or he simply wasn't mentioned in available documentation.


to this Court of Assizes
And whereas the aforesaid Iugaglia Bonanno, Buccellato, Salvatore, Giallo Vincenzo, and Giallo Vito have been duly found guilty by a jury.

Peppe Bonanno was convicted alongside Salvatore Buccellato.

The Buccellatos indeed were central to the 1896 Costa case and though there is nothing in the investigation to suggest the Buccellatos set the other conspirators up, the Bonanno clan may have been dismayed by Martino Buccellato's handling of the Giuseppe Costa murder or his brother Felice's threatening of Costa's brother in addition to other grievances. The "heat" brought on by the Buccellatos may have been distorted into something akin to "the Buccellatos deliberately put your uncles in prison" by the time Joe Bonanno heard the story twenty or more years later given the tendency to blame their rivals for any misfortune (e.g.. Stefano Bonanno's death in a rockslide). At least some of the Magaddinos and Buccellatos were once close, a Salvatore and Stefano Buccellato witnessing Giovanni Magaddino's 1882 marriage and Pietro Magaddino marrying a Buccellato daughter, but something led to the disintegration of this relationship before the end of the decade and it's reasonable to conclude the 1896 case was a contributing factor in addition to the possibility that Giuseppe Ingoglia stepped down from his leadership role, the 1896 case confirming the 50-year-old had already stepped back considerably as evidenced by his son Stefano serving as something of a *sostituto* to help direct the group.

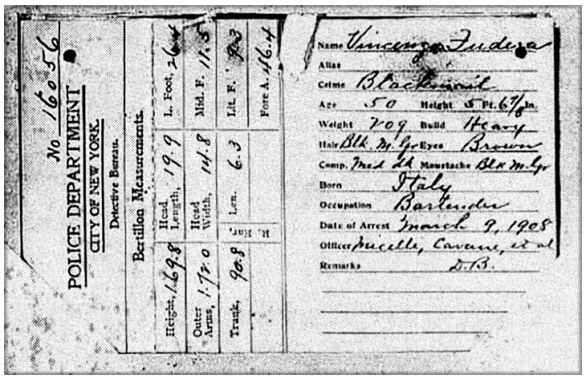
There is no reason to suspect murder victim Giuseppe Costa was himself involved with the mafia given his close relationship with police and the nature of his conflict with the "association". However, Costa's mother was a Garofalo from Castellammare, the surname of Bonanno underboss Francesco "Frank"

Garofalo. A younger generation of the Asaros also married into a family named Costa in New York and one of their sons remained an associate of Vinny Asaro through the 1980s but it is a common Italian name and no doubt a coincidence. Giuseppe Costa's murderers were part of the ongoing mafia tradition in Castellammare but Costa himself was an outsider who died for prioritizing the laws of legitimate society over the rules of the "society unto themselves."

The Asaros in America

Girolamo Asaro became a fugitive following the 1896 Costa murder and was not detained prior to the 1898 trial, where he was convicted in absentia and sentenced to life in prison. Martino Buccellato was similarly convicted in absentia and received a life sentence though he was presumed murdered. The ultimate outcome of the other convictions is murky, Peppe Bonanno serving a seemingly short sentence before his release in 1899 and Stefano Ingoglia's marriage that year confirms he was free as well. Asaro's whereabouts in the late 1890s is unconfirmed but he took on the alias "Vincenzo Fudera" as a fugitive and eventually made his way to the United States. "Fudera" was a variation of Fodera, a name common to Castellammare del Golfo.

The Kingdom of Italy issued an international warrant for Asaro's arrest following his 1898 conviction and American law enforcement was on the lookout for the absconding mafioso. Girolamo Asaro was finally arrested in a saloon at 237 Elizabeth Street in Lower Manhattan in 1908. He was located at least in part because of a "threatening letter" sent by Asaro to a Carlo Stea in NYC. Stea was from Bari in the Apulia region of the Italian mainland, making his own involvement in Cosa Nostra unlikely and indicates this was a "black hand" style extortion letter or another attempt at intimidation, the letter described as "blackmail". Regardless, it tells us that Asaro resumed illegal activities in NYC after his arrival from Castellammare despite living under an alias and fearing deportation to Italy where a life sentence awaited him.

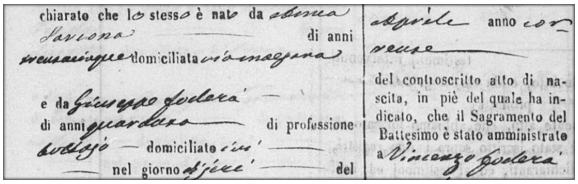


Asaro engaged in extortionate letters as "Fudera" in New York.

Girolamo Asaro had long been pursued by detectives working on behalf of Italian authorities and they were able to deduce that "Fudera" was Asaro, the man wanted in the Giuseppe Costa murder. In fact, it was the famed anti-mafia detective Joseph Petrosino who made the arrest and identified "Fudera" as Asaro. Petrosino entered the saloon and addressed Asaro by his true name, at which point Asaro confirmed his identity, though he denied having participated in the Costa murder. Despite the confirmation, Asaro attempted to pass himself as "Fudera" at police headquarters but they eventually brought his son Giuseppe Asaro to the station and asked him to identify his father among a group of other men. The younger Asaro identified the correct man as his father and gave Girolamo a pack of cigars before leaving. Girolamo Asaro subsequently admitted his true identity and confirmed his hometown as Castellammare, stating he entered the US in February of 1902.

During his police interviews, Asaro stated his father was named Giuseppe “Fudera” and mother was Anna Sarcona. Italian investigators repeatedly stated that Girolamo father's name was Mariano during the 1896 investigation, it being typical for Italian law enforcement to list fathers’ names, and this is reinforced by his eldest son's name, Mariano. Girolamo Asaro’s real mother was Giuseppa Sarcona, so he at least used the same maiden surname for his false mother. Asaro attempted to trick authorities into believing he was a different Girolamo Asaro, too, his defense including testimony from another Girolamo Asaro from Castellammare and the defense made reference to other Girolamo Asaros from his hometown.

Vincenzo Fodera was in fact a real person born in Castellammare in 1860 to Giuseppe Fodera and Anna Sarcona. Fodero was still living in Sicily at the time Girolamo Asaro was using his identity in New York, too, Fodera marrying a younger woman named Marie Galante in Castellammare in 1912. How or why Girolamo Asaro chose this man’s identity is unknown but they may have been cousins through the Sarcona name. The Fodera name is not otherwise known to intersect with Castellammarese mafiosi.


chiarato che lo stesso è nato da Anna
Sarcona di anni
trentacinque domiciliata via Maggiore
e da Giuseppe Fodera
di anni quarantuno di professione
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rente
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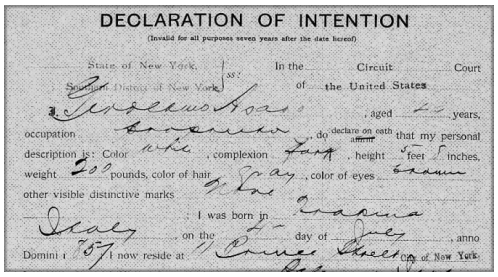
Battesimo è stato amministrato
a Vincenzo Fodera

Asaro used the identity of a real Vincenzo Fodera.

Asaro was living at 10 Prince Street in Lower Manhattan at the time of his 1908 arrest although he'd previously lived on Elizabeth Street. Despite living under an alias, Girolamo applied for naturalization under his true name the year

prior in 1907, listing his address then as 11 Prince Street across the street from his 1908 residence. He was listed at 5'8, 200 lbs. and described himself as a "proprietor" born in "Trapani" who was 49-years-old.

The birthday given on the application is July 4, 1857, which is exactly one month off from Girolamo Asaro's true birthday of June 4. Discrepancies of this nature are not uncommon in older American records for Sicilian immigrants. He also claimed to have entered the US in February 1903, exactly a year after the February 1902 date he gave detectives during his 1908 arrest. It's peculiar that despite fleeing a murder conviction and living under an alias he still applied for naturalization under his Asaro name and that the relevant data he provided was generally accurate.



DECLARATION OF INTENTION

(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

State of New York, } ss.: In the Circuit Court
Southern District of New York } of the United States

I, Girolamo Asaro, aged 49 years,
occupation Bootmaker, do declare on oath that my personal
description is: Color white, complexion Fair, height 5 feet 5 inches,
weight 200 pounds, color of hair Gray, color of eyes Brown
other visible distinctive marks None; I was born in Trapani
Italy, on the 4th day of July, anno
Domini 1857; I now reside at 11 Prince Street City of New York.

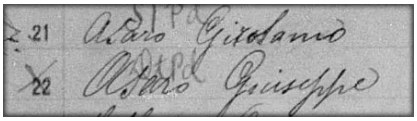
A match for Girolamo Asaro applied for naturalization in 1907.

Girolamo Asaro may have come to the United States under his true name as well. In October 1903, a Girolamo Asaro and his "nephew" Giuseppe arrived from Castellammare to Girolamo's "brother" Giacomo Asaro who was living at 243 Elizabeth Street, Giuseppe listing his father as Giacomo. This Girolamo appeared to list his age as fifty-four or fifty-nine, both ages conflicting with our Girolamo Asaro's true age of fifty-six at the time though age discrepancies are notoriously common on immigration manifests and other historic records as noted throughout this article. This Girolamo Asaro also claimed to have been single, unlike our Girolamo.

The year of 1903 does match the year of arrival given on the 1907 naturalization application though the month differs. Girolamo's eldest son Mariano claimed to have arrived in New York in early 1904 and his second son Giuseppe joined them the following year. By 1905, our Girolamo Asaro was living at the 243 Elizabeth address when he was joined by his wife Rosalia Iracani and their remaining children. In 1906, Giacomo Asaro arrived back to New York after returning to Sicily and was heading to his "brother" Girolamo Asaro who was still at 243 Elizabeth.

Giacomo Asaro's line would produce at least one confirmed Bonanno member, Andrew Asaro, who will be discussed later in the article but Giacomo was actually "our" Girolamo Asaro's first cousin, not his brother. Giacomo did have

an older brother named Girolamo Asaro born the same year as our Girolamo Asaro, so perhaps Giacomo's brother spent a period in New York at the same address as his namesake cousin or Giacomo listed our Girolamo Asaro as his "brother" to obscure his fugitive cousin's true identity. As noted, Girolamo Asaro's defense following his 1908 arrest attempted to stir confusion by referencing other Girolamo Asaros from Castellammare and his alias of Vincenzo Fodera was the identity of a real man who may have been a maternal cousin so it's possible he also utilized the identity of a paternal cousin who conveniently shared his real name and year of birth. Giacomo Asaro's brother Girolamo died in Castellammare in 1913 so if he did spent a period at the 243 Elizabeth location alongside his namesake cousin between 1903 and 1906, he did not stay in the United States permanently.



A Girolamo Asaro arrived to 243 Elizabeth in late 1903.

Following Girolamo Asaro's 1908 arrest, a Castellammarese neighbor who lived on Prince Street testified that he knew Asaro as "Vincenzo Fudera" in Italy and frequented his place of business, where "Fudera" sold wine. Others from Castellammare also testified they knew him under this alias, including Giuseppe Borruso, a former representative of the mayor of Castellammare who once served as a city councilman and became a pharmacist after coming to NYC. Borruso also told police that many of their Castellammarese *compaesani* congregated at the "Fudera" saloon on Elizabeth Street. Borruso himself was actually related to the Asaro family via a long-deceased politician in Castellammare named Bartolomeo Asaro who was a central figure in an infamous event in Castellammarese history. The Asaros and Borrusos were once close in both life and death, it perhaps being no coincidence that they were together again in Manhattan in 1908.

The 1862 Revolt & Turriciano

A violent political revolt occurred in Castellammare del Golfo after the Unification of Italy in which influential nobles like Dr. Francesco Borruso, Bartolomeo Asaro, and Asaro's son Girolamo were brutally murdered by angry farmers and shepherds. Resentment was already brewing given the wealthy were perceived as hoarding resources but forced conscription efforts intended to aid the new pro-unification government pushed a large force of angry villagers in motion, prompting hundreds of individuals from the municipality's lower classes to besiege the town over the course of three days beginning on January 1, 1862. Bartolomeo Asaro was an influential liberal

politician while Dr. Borruso was head of the National Guard and the families were in-laws.

Both the Asaros and Borrusos were part of the municipality's ruling class, referred to as the "*Cutrara*" beause they possessed the "*cutra*" ("blanket" in Sicilian dialect), a metaphor for wealth and political influence. Giuseppe Garibaldi's arrival to Sicily in 1860 and the revolution in Palermo that year reoriented the local political landscape, families like the Asaros and Borrusos already prosperous but gaining even more power following the Unification as proponents of the Kingdom of Italy. Forced conscription in service of the new government was extended to Sicily in June of 1861 and a number of objectors fled to the hills beyond Castellammare as tension built over the next six months, these sentiments motivated by practical concerns on the part of the peasantry but encouraged by the remaining pro-Bourbon elites still loyal to the Italian Republic. The Asaros and Borrusos were specifically among the main advocates for conscription, thus making them targets of the revolt.

The revolt began in the Porta Croce area that connects the town of Castellammare to the western mountains when a mob of armed men flying a red flag descended on the town shouting anti-conscription and pro-Republic slogans, the group swelling in size and intensity as other townspeople joined them, including women. As Commander of the National Guard, Dr. Francesco Borruso and a group of other leading figures confronted the protestors but failed to calm them and were forced to flee indoors, Borruso choosing a nearby home belonging to a farmer. His antagonists followed him inside and Borruso was stabbed, shot, and ultimately stoned to death by a female rioter. His body was then mutilated and set aflame.

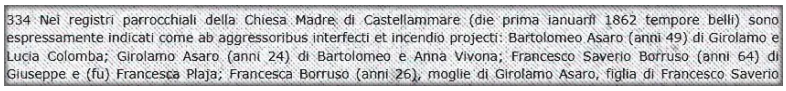
Still bloodthirsty, the mob continued their march through town and set fire to the *Casa Asaro* then breached the door. Bartolomeo and Girolamo were literally pulled away from their families then shot and burned alive. Girolamo Asaro's pregnant wife Francesca, the daughter of Dr. Francesco Borruso, attempted to escape through the roof but miscarried her twins and was shot to death before she could exit the home. Other nobles and liberal allies had their houses torn apart and burglarized, including that of Mayor Giuseppe Marcantonio, while government buildings were desecrated, the local tax collector was robbed, and inmates were freed from the local jail. The emboldened rioters also convened at the Chiesa Madre and sang hymns.

Unknown artist's depiction of the 1862 revolt in Castellammare.

Alcamo sent military reinforcements to quell the revolt, resulting in the deaths of several soldiers and an equivalent number of civilian protesters. More military aid was sent via ship and by January 3rd the riot was quieted although more deaths occurred on each side of the conflict. Snipers were sent to the countryside outside of Castellammare where various protesters had fled and executed six people, five of which were elderly or severely handicapped and the last of which was a priest. Young male rioters who escaped arrest allegedly lived in the hills as fugitives and became bandits. In addition to the murders of Dr. Francesco Borruso, his son-in-law Girolamo Asaro, and Girolamo's father Bartolomeo Asaro, an Antonino Galante was also killed by the mob during the revolt.

Bartolomeo Asaro was the uncle of "our" Girolamo Asaro, one account of the 1862 revolt stating that Bartolomeo was born to an elder Girolamo Asaro and Lucia Columba. Vital records confirm "our" Girolamo's father Mariano Asaro was born to parents with the same names and in addition to naming his eldest son Girolamo after his father, Mariano named his daughter Lucia after his mother. Bartolomeo's murdered son Girolamo would therefore be named for the same father he shared with Mariano and the mafioso Girolamo Asaro was his first cousin although the latter was still a young child at the time. Bartolomeo Asaro had another son named Andrea though he was mentioned only peripherally in reference to the events of 1862.

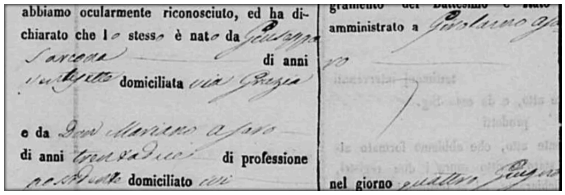
Bartolomeo Asaro (b. 1813) and his son Girolamo (b. ~1837) are significant to this story not only in that they were our Girolamo's uncle and first cousin but also because they represented the nobility and therefore place Girolamo Asaro's ancestry among the town's upper classes. There is other evidence affirming that Girolamo Asaro was born into local nobility. Girolamo's 1857 birth record identifies his father as "Don Mariano Asaro" and refers to Don Mariano as a *possidente*. The couple attempted to have a son named Girolamo much earlier in 1846, this son dying prematurely, but his birth record too identifies Mariano Asaro as a "Don".


334 Nei registri parrocchiali della Chiesa Madre di Castellammare (die prima ianuarii 1862 tempore belli) sono espressamente indicati come ab aggressoribus interfecti et incendio projecti: Bartolomeo Asaro (anni 49) di Girolamo e Lucia Colomba; Girolamo Asaro (anni 24) di Bartolomeo e Anna Vivona; Francesco Saverio Borruso (anni 64) di Giuseppe e (fu) Francesca Plaja; Francesca Borruso (anni 26), moglie di Girolamo Asaro, figlia di Francesco Saverio

Bartolomeo's parents were reportedly Girolamo Asaro & Lucia Columba.

The record for daughter Lucia's birth in 1849 identifies Mariano Asaro's parents as Don Girolamo and Donna Lucia Columba, making Girolamo Asaro's namesake grandfather a Don as well. Mariano Asaro's 1823 birth record lists his father Girolamo as a *villico*, a term typically used to refer to a laborer or peasant, but his brother Giuseppe's baptism in 1827 assigns the Don and Donna titles to Girolamo and Lucia. Giuseppe Asaro's godfather was a Don Francesco Briguccia.

"Don" was not a trivial title in 19th century Sicily and was used on formal documents to refer to a highly exclusive, limited class of citizen. In reviewing thousands of Castellammarese vital documents while researching this article, it was rare to see the term "Don" attached to a name even when other information about the family indicated affluence. Unsurprisingly, Bartolomeo was listed as "Don Bartolomeo Asaro" on the birth record for one of his children and coverage of the 1862 revolt refers to him with the title. Records for brother Giuseppe similarly identify him as "Don Giuseppe Asaro".


abbiamo ocularmente riconosciuto, ed ha dichiarato che l[illegible] stess[illegible] è nat[illegible] da [illegible] di anni [illegible] domiciliata [illegible] e da [illegible] di anni [illegible] di professione [illegible] domiciliato [illegible]

amministrato a [illegible] nel giorno [illegible]

Girolamo Asaro's father was identified as "Don Mariano".

One firsthand account of the 1862 revolt describes the writer embracing "Don Mariano Asaro" during the emotional aftermath of the revolt, Mariano also identified as a notary. Although the "Don" title shows up rarely in Castellammarese vital records, many of the ones I did encounter were Asaros. Their relation to Bartolomeo, Mariano, and Giuseppe is undetermined but it's evident the Asaro name as a whole was central to Castellammare's historic power structure, accounts of the 1862 incident explicitly stating the Asaro clan represented by Bartolomeo Asaro were one of the families resented for their enduring grip on the town.

The Asaros' direct political influence may have waned after 1862, Bartolomeo being the only confirmed politician, but there is no information suggesting they fell on particularly hard times financially. Girolamo Asaro is listed as a *possidente* on his 1885 marriage record and the 1896 investigation showed him to be a business and property owner. Girolamo Asaro's entry into the mafia

did not come from the desperation of a peasant, his background instead complementing Asaro's peers Giuseppe Ingoglia and Peppe Bonanno in that all of these men were not only wealthy and influential themselves but came from older generations of wealth and influence.

Neither Mariano nor Bartolomeo Asaro are identified as mafiosi in any public acounts. Their nobility and Bartolomeo's involvement in political and military affairs does not rule them out from membership, though. Dr. Melchiorre Allegra identified numerous members of the professional and political class as Cosa Nostra members between the 1910s and '30s, including nobles. Decades of investigation into the Sicilian mafia has similarly revealed the mafia membership of men from these classes, including Family leaders, this element being the quintessential *alta mafia*.

The mafia as a whole was a collaboration between the upper classes and the peasant or bandit class, the respective *alta* and *bassa*. Joe Bonanno stated that the influence of the mafioso rested on his ability to negotiate with people of all types, this being true for the mafia's external network but also its internal membership. Bartolomeo Asaro was unable to reach an agreement with the rioters who stormed the *Casa Asaro*, but his nephew Girolamo was of the same class and the Giuseppe Costa investigation showed him capable of collaborating closely with the mafia's own peasantry, the mafiosi named in the 1896 case coming from a variety of backgrounds.

The Asaros were killed in their own home, *Casa Asaro* (pictured).

A Giuseppe Buccellato was a significant participant in the riots and relevant names like D'Angelo, Vitale, DiBenedetto, Cascio, Bologna, Puma, and DiFilippi were also named for their involvement. Dr. James Buccellato confirmed that Giuseppe Buccellato was the eldest brother of Giovanni and Salvatore from the 1896 Costa case and that Giuseppe's direct descendants later became affiliates of the Castellammare Family along with his namesake Giuseppe

Buccellato joining the Bonanno Family, a striking revelation. There were also rumors that a brigand element under Pasquale Turriciano (b. 1841) joined in the 1862 revolt. Turriciano was a prominent "Robin Hood" folk hero in Castellammare throughout the 1860s who engaged in cattle rustling, extortion, and "private vendettas", many of the men under him working as agricultural laborers by day and brigands by night. Local historians have described Turriciano as an effective propagandist, successfully convincing the public that his group engaged in an honorable form of brigandry. According to one story, he forced an underling to return stolen items to a victim as Turriciano didn't believe the thief had a practical need for the goods.

Turriciano and his gang operated in the same rural Baida district later inhabited by Giuseppe Ingoglia and other 1896 Castellammarese mafiosi. A key associate of Turriciano's was Francesco Plescia (b. 1842), known as "*Lo Greco*" (the Greek), this likely being the man of the same name identified as the mafia *capo* in 1883. Plescia was part of Pasquale Turriciano's inner circle and descriptions of his role suggest he was a lieutenant in Turriciano's brigand network. Other associates with relevant names were Girolamo DiFilippi and Antonino Mistretta. Mistrettas have been identified in Castellammarese mafia outposts in several locations, there being a current Bonanno member named Antonino Mistretta and another man of the same name was an early Castellammarese power in the Endicott area during the 1930s. Peppe Bonanno's wife was a DiFilippi and his daughter married a younger Girolamo DiFilippi, their son the Bonanno affiliate Jack DiFilippi described earlier. Another brigand in Turriciano's circle was Camillo Caiozzo, the same name as a man the "Good Killers" were accused of murdering in 1921 for his involvement in the Buccellato-ordered murder of Pietro Magaddino.

The age of 1883 boss Francesco Plescia was not given in available coverage of the Duke Calvino kidnapping but the age of Turriciano's associate would make him around 41-years-old at the time of the Calvino case. The rarity of the Plescia name in Castellammare and this Plescia's involvement in brigandry decades earlier indicates this was the later mafia leader. This is further reinforced by 1896 boss Giuseppe Ingoglia's association with Salvatore Adragna in 1888, Adragna described during the investigation as a former companion of the "notorious bandit" Plescia. The only "notorious bandit" named Plescia in Castellammarese history was Francesco Plescia from Turriciano's 1860s group and "coincidentally" this is the name of the Castellammarese mafia leader in the early 1880s, the organization then continuing under Plescia's possible relative Giuseppe Ingoglia in the same Baida district where Turriciano and Plescia once operated despite Ingoglia himself being anything but a struggling bandit.

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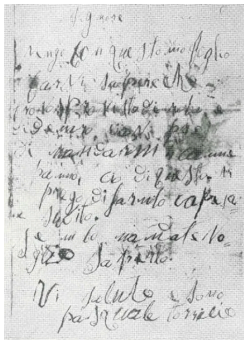
(31) Oltre a Pasquale Torregiani, Camillo Cajozzo di Vincenzo, nato il 20 aprile 1838; Antonino Mistretta (n. l'11 maggio 1847); Vincenzo La Rocca (n. il 28 marzo 1848); Francesco Plescia inteso Lo Greco (n. il 4 ottobre 1842); Vincenzo Como inteso Navetta (n. 21 ottobre 1849); Vincenzo Di Giorgio (n. il 2 febbraio 1835); Vincenzo Cacioppo (n. il 28 agosto 1851) e altri tre o quattro che non furono sufficientemente identificati durante il processo come appartenenti alla banda Torregiani, ma che furono associati ad una ventina di altri imputati favoreggiatori o avventizi della banda stessa.

Francesco Plescia was a lieutenant of famed bandit Turriciano.

The defense in the 1883 Calvino case argued that Plescia could not have been the well-dressed, mannerly captor who watched over the Duke in the Pedale cave because Francesco Plescia was not educated, this assertion complementing his background as a rural brigand with Turriciano's group, a conglomeration of frustrated peasants and laborers. The 1860s bandit group was not unsophisticated, though. Plescia's superior Turriciano had connections to Castellammare mayor Niccolo D'Anna and in 1869 the Castellammare City Council was dissolved due to its ties to Turriciano, military authorities notifying the Palermo prefect of suspected mafia collusion. The Castellammarese municipal leadership was specifically accused of assisting the Turriciano group evade capture for a period of seven years.

Another indication of mafia ties came from the 1868 arrest of Antonino Buffa after Buffa killed a man in Castellammare. Buffa was described as operating with a "mafia-like conduct" and had ties to powerful local politicians. Buffa even helped safeguard the nobility and their assets during the 1862 revolt, placing him on the other side of the conscription riots. Facing the death penalty for the 1868 murder, Buffa offered to reveal the hiding place of Pasquale Turriciano in exchange for leniency. Buffa's cooperation led investigators to Turriciano's hideout and the brigand leader was ultimately killed in a firefight with police in 1870. Interestingly, Francesco Plescia's godparents were a Camillo and Maria Buffa, the Castellammarese Buffa name also connecting to the Asaros later in New York. If Antonino Buffa assisted the nobility during the 1862 revolt but was also in a position to know the hideout of Pasquale Turriciano years later this suggests he was a middleman between these rival classes.



Authorities obtained crude letters written by Turriciano.

The notoriety of Turriciano's gang peaked in 1866 when the fugitive brigands clashed violently with police on multiple occasions but the group was reportedly organized as early as 1862, the same year as the revolt. Pasquale Turriciano's direct involvement in the revolt is speculative but many of the perpetrators of the riot fled to the countryside and were suspected of falling into brigand groups, of which Turriciano was the chief organizer. There was no explicit mafia element implied in the revolt of 1862 and the Sicilian mafia was once known to induct bandits alongside nobles and everyone in between, making it difficult to rule out mafia involvement on either side of the conflict, especially given how tenuous and circumstantial the mafia's loyalties can be and the fact that mafiosi sometimes clash over conflicting political interests.

Famed 20th century bandit leader Salvatore Giuliano from Montelepre was identified by Tommaso Buscetta as a member of Cosa Nostra, Buscetta claiming to have been formally introduced to Giuliano as an *uomo d'onore* in Palermo, and Giuliano's assistant Gaspare Pisciotta similarly told authorities Giuliano went through a mafia-like induction of some sort. The mafia inducted nobles and esteemed professionals but the organization was not above initiating bandits and general ruffians, particularly those who showed initiative, charisma, and leadership ability like Giuliano. Giuliano had the added benefit of relation to known mafia figures in Montelepre but Pasquale Turriciano was cut from a similar mold in that he was not an "ordinary" lawless terrorist but a highly-disciplined leader over an organized brigand group with political ties.

A senior member of the current Castellammare Family is Vito Turriciano and his son Stefano spent time in the United States where he associated with modern Bonanno figures. A Castellammarese mafioso affiliated with the Pittston Family who lived in New York's Southern Tier also shared the bandit leader's exact name of Pasquale Turriciano, adopting the variant spelling "Turrigiano" in the United States just as the brigand did in the 1860s. There could be a common relation but as with Vito this remains undetermined.

The Turriciano name resurfaced with Vito (L) & Pasquale (R)

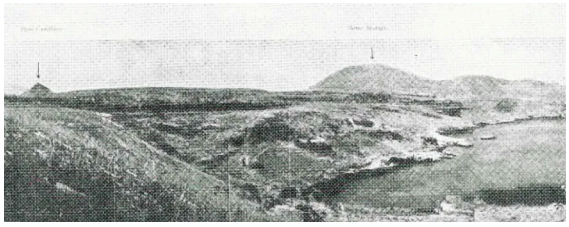
What's known of Pasquale Turriciano the bandit leader is heavily steeped in mythology thus making his true character difficult to unravel. Whether

Pasquale Turriciano's group was already affiliated with the mafia and thus represented its *bassa* faction, Francesco Plescia's close association with Turriciano at least confirms the mafia eventually recruited select individuals from this brigand element. Turriciano's death in 1870 ended his story but Francesco Plescia had reportedly broken off from his former leader the year previous. Italian authorities claimed that in the summer of 1969, Plescia started his own "gang" that included former Turriciano associates Vincenzo LaRocca, Nicolo DiMarco, Andrea Piazza, Giovanni Salamone, and Giuseppe LiPari. Other former Turriciano associates like the Virgamoda brothers and a DiMaria were from Alcamo and started their own independent group comprised of five members. The hometown origins of Plescia's "gang" show no obvious links to the Castellammarese mafia nor are they particularly relevant to the town itself but Plescia on his own is provides the most relevant thread.

Pasquale Turriciano's associates breaking off in 1869 is significant, as it coincides with Palermo's dissolution of the Castellammare city council and the bandit's rumored political support evaporating, plus this coincided with Antonino Buffa's decision to reveal Turriciano's whereabouts to authorities — Turriciano lost political support around roughly the same time his underworld allies abandoned him. Authorities attributed the shift to "internal disagreements" but the other brigands may have sensed the time was opportune to distance themselves from their leader in addition to other grievances. There is no information suggesting these bandit factions were truly formal nor continuous with the regional mafia groups that emerged in the 1883 Duke Calvino case but there still may have been a degree of ritualism at play. Francesco Plescia, Vincenzo LaRocca, Giuseppe LiPari, and Andrea Piazza were arrested in November 1869 and police found a small bag in their possession containing images of saints. When Pasquale Turriciano was killed the following year, images of saints and a copper crucifix were found in his possession. Arrested in 1870, his associate Antonino Mistretta too had a bag containing "effigies" of saints and a prayer book.

In total, authorities believed forty men served under Pasquale Turriciano at various points, some of them "members" and others "temporary workers". Seven of them were killed: Antonino Chiofalo, Gaetano DiGiorgio aka "Carrubba", Vito Fontana, Antonino Mercadante, Leonardo DiBenedetto aka "Martino", Giuseppe Pace, and Gioacchino Gervasi. Two others, Nicolo DiMarco and Giuseppe Morsellino, died in prison "during the preliminary investigation." An unspecified associate fled to America but twenty-one others were tried in late 1871 on various charges including murder, robbery, kidnapping, and cattle rustling. Camillo Caiozzo, Liborio Turriciano, and Giovanni Salamone were sentenced to death by beheading; Vito Caiozzo,

Antonino Mistretta, Vincenzo Como, Andrea Pizza, Gaetano Vallone, and the fugitive Alberto Barbara were given life imprisonment with hard labor; while Salvatore Caiozzo, Vincenzo LaRocca, and Francesco Plescia were given three to twenty years hard labor. Most of the sentences were later reduced and the death sentences were commuted to life with hard labor. Salamone, initially condemned to death, was eventually released in 1911.



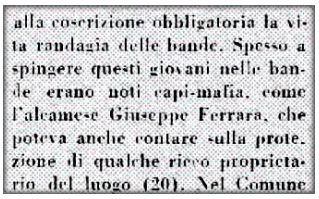
The Turriciano bandits operated in the mountains beyond Castellammare.

There are several surnames among the Turriciano group that produced mafiosi but they are not the prominent names that defined the traditional Castellammarese mafia. Even at a glance, many of the names associated with the 1883 and 1896 cases fit our expectations of what the Castellammare Family "should" have looked like in those eras. The expected surnames are present and even many of the "unfamiliar" names from those investigations appear to connect to the extensive clan networks that informed local mafia membership. Both cases also included members who ranged from upper class *possidenti* to peasants and laborers. Pasquale Turriciano's gang was well-connected, had an operational structure, operated in the mafia-connected Baida district, and infused their banditry with religious iconography and a certain "rogue philosophy", but the group was comprised entirely of young peasants who roamed the countryside as fugitives and criminal vagrants.

Francesco Plescia received one of the most lenient sentences in the 1871 trial and most of the sentences were reduced upon appeal, Plescia presumably serving relatively little of his projected three to twenty year sentence. There is no reason to suspect his breakaway group from 1869 evolved into the mafia organization he headed in 1883. The mafia of 1880s and '90s Castellammare did engage in low class crime like kidnapping and cattle rustling but it's unlikely the local mafia "Tradition" Joe Bonanno's ancestors belonged to traced its roots to a gang of bandits led by an *Arbëreshë* who declared himself independent from another bandit little more than a decade earlier. Plescia's role as a lieutenant under Turriciano then leader of his own splinter group does however shed some light on why he was viewed as a viable mafia recruit who grew to be a reported leader by the early 1880s. His connection to the Ingoglia name or other unknown factors may have provided him a pathway

into the mafia but he demonstrated leadership ability even as a mountain bandit.

Anti-conscription protests elsewhere in Trapani were reportedly encouraged by mafia *capi* like Giuseppe Ferrara of Alcamo, confirming rumors of mafia collusion were circulating in 1862 when the Castellammarese revolt occurred. Investigators believed Turriciano's brigand group showed circumstantial evidence of mafia collaboration, Francesco Plescia's association with Turriciano adding weight to the idea, but these relationships were not black and white. Much larger political forces were at play in Sicily during the early 1860s so we can't assume the mafia was central to what took place in Castellammare in 1862 although if it was, it may have been divided between the two classes. Antonino Buffa, implied to be a mafioso in 1868, was said to have helped protect the nobility in 1862 yet he was also close enough to the Turriciano bandit group to reveal the leader's hideout to authorities, further suggesting the mafia had ties to both of the 1862 factions.

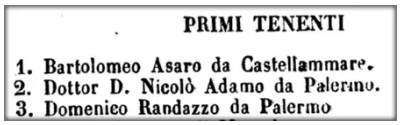

alla coscrizione obbligatoria la vi-
ta randagia delle bande. Spesso a
spingere questi giovani nelle ban-
de erano noti capi-mafia, come
l'alcamese Giuseppe Ferrara, che
poteva anche contare sulla prote-
zione di qualche ricco proprieta-
rio del luogo (20). Nel Comune

Alcamo *capo* Giuseppe Ferrara encouraged anti-conscription protests.

The mafia was involved in pro-unification efforts in Palermo during the early 1860s, some of these mafia-linked participants being ancestors of future Gambino Family leaders identified in the May 2014 issue of *Informer Journal*, but to date these direct links have not been fully substantiated in Castellammare. Joe Bonanno however boasts in *A Man of Honor* that men of his "Tradition", including Bonanno's grandfather, were among Garibaldi's core supporters and directly aided the unification efforts. This grandfather was presumably Giuseppe Bonanno but Joe comments elsewhere in the memoir about his other grandfather, Martino Bonventre, continuing to wear a pro-Garibaldi sash decades after the revolution.

A report by the Sicilian General Parliament from 1848 identifies a Bartolomeo Asaro from Castellammare as a First Lieutenant credited with participating in the revolution against the Bourbon government which occurred primarily in Palermo earlier that year. The Bartolomeo Asaro killed in 1862 was involved with military affairs and his in-law Dr. Francesco Borruso commanded the National Guard, this 1848 man likely referring to the same Asaro. The 1848 revolution is often viewed as a precursor to Giuseppe Garibaldi's unification campaign, so Bartolomeo Asaro's likely involvement in the Palermo revolution

complements his support of Garibaldi and may have contributed to his reputation in 1860.



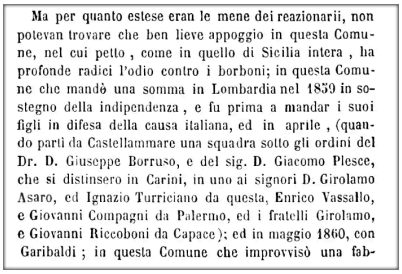
PRIMI TENENTI

1. Bartolomeo Asaro da Castellammare.
2. Dottor D. Nicolò Adamo da Palermo.
3. Domenico Randazzo da Palermo

A Bartolomeo Asaro was a First Lieutenant during the 1848 revolution.

It can be inferred from the Borrusos' and Asaros' pro-conscription efforts that the two families were Garibaldi supporters who welcomed the Unification of Italy given conscription was intended to bolster the new government's manpower. Direct confirmation comes via Giuseppe Calandra's 1862 report *I Casi di Castellammare del Golfo colle loro Prime Cause*. Calandra states that supporters from Castellammare sent money to Lombardy in support of Italian independence as early as 1859 and was one of the first towns to send its "sons" to support Garibaldi's "cause", specifically naming Dr. Giuseppe Borruso and Don Giacomo Plesce of Castellammare as the men who "ordered" Don Girolamo Asaro and an Ignazio Turriciano to assist with the revolution in April of 1860, this date coinciding with initial skirmishes in Palermo and perhaps coincidentally linking the Asaro and Turriciano names. Calandra says Borruso and Plesce had already "distinguished themselves" in Carini and that Asaro and Turriciano joined up with various Palermo figures in these efforts, notably Girolamo and Giuseppe Riccobono of Capaci.

The 1862 report also stated that Castellammare del Golfo welcomed Giuseppe Garibaldi when he arrived in Sicily that May, Garibaldi initially docking in Marsala and his march to Palermo coming through Trapani province. In addition to the Castellammaresi providing Garibaldi's forces with supplies and showering them with excitement, Giuseppe Garibaldi dined at the Asaro home where the chair he sat in was preserved until it was demolished in the fires set by Bartolomeo and Girolamo Asaros' killers during the 1862 riot. The Dr. Giuseppe Borruso named by Calandra was the son of Dr. Francesco Borruso and Don Girolamo Asaro was presumably Bartolomeo's son, the families related through marriage.



Ma per quanto estese eran le mene dei reazionarii, non potevan trovare che ben lieve appoggio in questa Comune, nel cui petto, come in quello di Sicilia intera, ha profonde radici l'odio contro i borboni; in questa Comune che mandò una somma in Lombardia nel 1859 in sostegno della indipendenza, e fu prima a mandar i suoi figli in difesa della causa italiana, ed in aprile, (quando partì da Castellammare una squadra sotto gli ordini del Dr. D. Giuseppe Borruso, e del sig. D. Giacomo Plesce, che si distinsero in Carini, in uno ai signori D. Girolamo Asaro, ed Ignazio Turriciano da questa, Enrico Vassallo, e Giovanni Compagni da Palermo, ed i fratelli Girolamo, e Giovanni Riccoboni da Capace); ed in maggio 1860, con Garibaldi; in questa Comune che improvvisò una fab-

The Borrusos and Asaros were early Garibaldi supporters

The other names referenced by Giuseppe Calandra are significant as well. The involvement of Ignazio Turriciano in pro-unification activities with the Asaros and Borrusos places the Turriciano surname alongside Garibaldi loyalists in contrast to the brigand Pasquale Turriciano, who at least capitalized on the political unrest from the 1862 Castellammare revolt and may have directly encouraged it. The Palermo names are of greater interest, though, as the Riccobonos from the Capaci-Sferracavallo-Tommaso Natale area were one of the mafia clans named in the May 2014 *Informer* article as direct participants in Garibaldi's revolution.

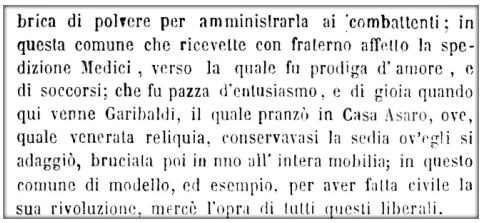
The extended Riccobono-Scalici-Virzi clan mirrored the Castellammarese clans in that it originated in the Sicilian mafia and produced many interrelated Cosa Nostra members in New York, most prominently Frank Scalise and Giuseppe Riccobono of the Gambino Family. Giuseppe's father was a Giovanni Riccobono, like the one named as a collaborator of the Castellammarese Garibaldi supporters. The Riccobonos produced multiple generations of Gambino members, including captains and administrators, and an older Riccobono was identified as a Palermo member in the SanGiorgi report at the turn of the 20th century. Rosario Riccobono was the infamous boss of nearby Partanna Mondello in the early 1980s, the Riccobono name common throughout these towns but consistently intertwined with the various mafia outposts on the northwestern outskirts of Palermo *citta*.

The Asaros in Castellammare (L) worked with Riccobonos in Capaci (R).

The Enrico Vassallo mentioned as another collaborator provides another potential lead. Though this Vassallo was said to be from "Palermo" and not the Capaci area specifically, Gambino *consigliere* Giuseppe Riccobono's brother-in-law was a Salvatore Vassallo from Tommaso Natale. A San Jose member also named Salvatore Vassallo was from Sferracavallo and associated with the Bonannos while living in Upstate New York before moving to San Jose, Vassallo likely having been initiated into the Bonanno Family prior to his move. In the Bay Area, Vassallo primarily associated with Nicolo Guastella from Capaci and Prospect "Beau" Mule, both confirmed Bonanno members

who transferred to San Jose, the latter the son of Castellammarese Bonanno member Vito Mule. Guastella's wife was another Vassallo from Tommaso Natale and their daughter married Beau Mule. Guastella was an artist but was mentioned briefly earlier given he once lived in Wappingers Falls and together with Vito Mule assisted Salvatore Maranzano's bootlegging operations in the 1920s.

Discovering that the Asaros collaborated with Riccobonos of Capaci and an Enrico Vassallo of Palermo in 1860 doesn't explain why two mafiosi from Capaci-Sferracavallo, one named Vassallo and one married to that name, fell into the American Bonanno network sixty years later but the pattern is worth observing. Guastella worked directly for Salvatore Maranzano and his daughter later married a Castellammarese member but his actual entry point into the Bonanno Family is unknown and Salvatore Vassallo's exact trajectory is even more uncertain. Beyond the coincidences, the 1860 reference communicates that important families in Castellammare were allied with Palermitano clans suspected of representing the "mafia wing" of Garibaldi's forces. The Asaros were important enough to the cause that Giuseppe Garibaldi visited them at their home and Joe Bonanno's grandfathers were diehard supporters, making it easy to conclude that the *alta mafia* in Castellammare was aligned in favor of unification.


brica di polvere per amministrarla ai combattenti; in questa comune che ricevette con fraterno affetto la spedizione Medici, verso la quale fu prodiga d'amore, e di soccorsi; che fu pazza d'entusiasmo, e di gioia quando qui venne Garibaldi, il quale pranzò in Casa Asaro, ove, quale venerata reliquia, conservavasi la sedia ov'egli si adaggiò, bruciata poi in uno all' intera mobilia; in questo comune di modello, ed esempio, per aver fatta civile la sua rivoluzione, mercè l'opra di tutti questi liberali.

Garibaldi was reportedly a guest of Bartolomeo Asaro in Castellammare.

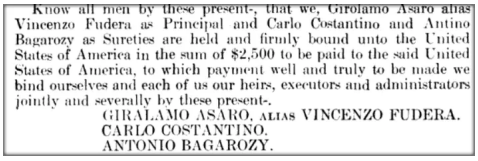
The make-up of the Castellammarese mafia in the 1860s is entirely speculative but if the older Asaros, Bonannos, and Bonventres were in fact full-fledged mafiosi, we can't assume the political interests of these *possidenti* and *borgesi* represented the whole of the organization. With the Alcamese *capo* Giuseppe Ferrara alleged to have encouraged anti-conscription protests in his locale and Pasquale Turriciano's potential intersection with the mafia and the events of 1862, it's conceivable that division existed in the local mafia as a new political environment settled into place and an opposition faction fanned the flames of the lower classes, culminating in the riot. According to Joe Bonanno, one of the accusations his relatives made against the Buccellatos in the late 1890s was that the latter clan was capable of "hiring criminals and bandits to fight their battles" against the Bonannos, it perhaps being no coincidence that a Buccellato and a rumored bandit element participated in the 1862 riots at

the expense of pro-Garibaldi figures with direct ties to the town's upper class mafiosi.

The families of 1862 murder victims Bartolomeo Asaro and Dr. Francesco Borruso were related by marriage in addition to their political alliance so a Borruso serving as a witness on behalf of our Girolamo Asaro in Manhattan 46 years later shows ongoing association between the two surnames. It's also significant that a politically-engaged pharmacist descended from Castellammarese nobility associated with Girolamo Asaro in New York and was willing to lie on his behalf even if Borruso's intention was simply to protect his *paesano* from outsiders opposed to full-on mafia collusion. Knowing the history of the Asaro and Borruso families as well as the historic status of Girolamo's father and uncle indicates the relationship was closer than that, though. The 1862 revolt, though leaving more questions than answers, helps provide substantial insight into who the Asaros once were in Castellammare and connects them to one of the most volatile events in the town's history.

Connection to the Early Bonanno Leadership

Girolamo Asaro was convicted of the Giuseppe Costa murder in absentia in 1898 and sentenced to life imprisonment in Italy, authorities still aggressively pursuing him ten years later, but American law determined that a conviction in Italy did not translate to conviction in the US, only an accusation, and courts ruled that the evidence against Asaro in Italy translated to hearsay. As a result, Asaro was released on bail. Two men who secured Asaro's release were Carlo Costantino and Antonio Bagarozy. Carlo Costantino, said to live at 778 Myrtle Ave in Williamsburg, was identified in the May 2014 issue of *Informer Journal* as a leading member of the early Bonanno Family under its first known boss Paolo Orlando during the period Asaro arrived to New York and other mafia historians have previously outlined his prominent role in the emerging American mafia, his name directly linked to New York's early bosses Giuseppe Morello and Ignazio Lupo.

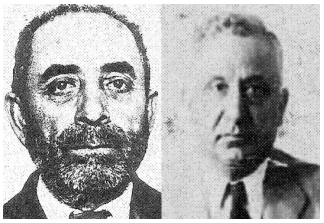

Know all men by these present-, that we, Girolamo Asaro alias Vincenzo Fudera as Principal and Carlo Costantino and Antino Bagarozy as Sureties are held and firmly bound unto the United States of America in the sum of $2,500 to be paid to the said United States of America, to which payment well and truly to be made we bind ourselves and each of us our heirs, executors and administrators jointly and severally by these present-.

GIRALAMO ASARO, ALIAS VINCENZO FUDERA.
CARLO COSTANTINO.
ANTONIO BAGAROZY.

Carlo Costantino posted bail for Girolamo Asaro.

Costantino was from Partinico along with other formative Bonanno members while Orlando was from Camporeale and related to the clan of Nicolo Schiro, who served as Bonanno boss between 1912 and 1930 prior to the elevation of

Salvatore Maranzano. Costantino, Schiro, and Orlando were part of an extended network of interrelated mafia leaders from Camporeale and Partinico, some descendants of the clan's Camporealese side continuing in the Bonanno Family while others branched out to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Kansas City, and New Orleans between the 1920s and 1940s. The suspected New Orleans boss during the late 1910s was another individual linked to these men, Leonardo Cipolla from Partinico, who lived in Williamsburg as a probable Bonanno member at the same time as Carlo Costantino, Cipolla also an alleged relative of early New Orleans member and Los Angeles boss Vito DiGiorgio from neighboring Borgetto. Cipolla returned to Williamsburg in the 1920s after experiencing legal trouble in New Orleans and associated with Nicolo Schiro into the 1930s, the two even traveling to Sicily together, though Cipolla was later murdered in 1943 for unknown reasons.



Costantino (L) & Cipolla (R) represented a Partinicese element in NYC.

Carlo Costantino and his Partinicese cousin Antonino Passananti were identified in an anonymous letter as subordinates of Williamsburg "*capo*" Paolo Orlando in 1909, the same letter referenced earlier that identified Orlando as a previous "*capo*" of Tunis. Costantino was a significant figure not only within the budding Bonanno group but in New York as a whole and even internationally. An earlier confiscated letter revealed that Costantino was invited to attend a banquet with *capo dei capi* Giuseppe Morello and other significant New York mafiosi to welcome Vito Cascio Ferro when he arrived to America in 1901.

Costantino's other documented association with Morello, Ignazio Lupo, and top New York leaders during this era suggest Costantino was a leading figure himself within Paolo Orlando's group. Costantino was also a suspected conspirator with Cascio Ferro in the 1909 Joe Petrosino murder after returning to Sicily at the end of the decade, Costantino allegedly baring some responsibility for killing the man who arrested his associate Girolamo Asaro the previous year. The anonymous letter that identified Costantino and Passananti as subordinates of Paolo Orlando also linked Orlando himself to the Petrosino murder. Asaro's arrest was certainly not the sole cause of Petrosino's assassination but can be viewed as part of a larger pattern that motivated the international mafia network to eliminate him and Asaro in

particular could have been relevant to the Orlando group's interest in the matter given his arrest occurred the previous year.

That Costantino bailed Asaro out after his 1908 arrest further reinforces Costantino's role in the early Bonanno Family and the coexistence of the Castellammaresi with the Family's Camporealese and Partinicese leadership. The Family continued to feature leaders from the Partinico area among the top leadership even at the beginning of Joe Bonanno's reign but its presence quickly faded. Filippo Rappa was from Borgetto, a small *comune* that adjoins Partinico, where he was an active member of the Sicilian mafia during the early 1920s and linked to multiple murders in the region. After coming to the US in the mid-1920s he served as *consigliere* under Joe Bonanno's leadership for much of the 1930s and died under highly suspicious circumstances the following decade, being replaced in this role by John Tartamella from Castellammare.

Early leaders like Rappa were replaced by Castellammaresi.

Another prominent Partinicese member of the Bonanno Family was Salvatore Mangiaracina, noted earlier as an alleged relative of Vito "Brewster Bill" Giallo's bootlegging associate Stefano LoPiccolo from Pioppo, the two men linked on multiple travel manifests as "cousins". Mangiaracina was once a leading name in the Family who in the Bonannos' own telling oversaw the Family's numbers operation but was banished to Sicily for stealing money then murdered for returning to New York without permission. Bill Bonanno noted that a member cannot be killed for a financial infraction, Mangiaracina's death rather the result of ignoring the boss's ruling that he be shelved and exiled. An arrival manifest in 1935 shows Mangiaracina returned to New York and was supposed to be accompanied by Benedetto Grippi, Schiro's Partinicese nephew, though Grippi did not ultimately travel; this was presumably the trip that prompted Salvatore Mangiaracina's murder. The Bonannos' own autobiographical film A *Godfather's Story* depicts the Mangiaracina story and shows his body to have been buried in concrete.

Mangiaracina may have been mentioned by Nicola Gentile as well, Gentile identifying a Salvatore Mangiaracina as part of a peace commission during the Castellammarese War otherwise comprised of national *rappresentanti* and

consiglieri, including Gentile himself, suggesting this Mangiaracina held rank. While there were families of Mangiaracinas involved with Cosa Nostra in other American cities, no other Salvatore Mangiaracinas from the era have been identified as members and the Bonanno member is the strongest candidate. Prominent Bonanno figures from the Partinico area like Rappa, Cipolla, and Salvatore Mangiaracina were all murdered or died suspiciously during the first phase of Joe Bonanno's reign as the Castellammaresi gained even more influence. Stefano LoPiccolo also died of natural causes in 1942.

In addition to Filippo Rappa, another *consigliere* in the 1930s was identified by Bill Bonanno as Sebastiano "Frank Italiano" Mano from Alcamo, who was murdered in 1935. Joe Bonanno described "Italiano" as his chief rival in the 1931 election in which Bonanno was elected boss. Angelo Caruso, a native of Leonforte in Enna, served as Salvatore Maranzano's underboss and then the Family's acting boss prior to Joe Bonanno's election, Bonanno stating Caruso represented the "non-Castellammarese" faction, but Caruso was taken down to soldier in 1931 and wouldn't be promoted again until the 1950s when he became a *capodecina*. By the 1940s the entire administration was Castellammarese for the first time in the organization's known history, it being comprised of boss Joe Bonanno, underboss Frank Garofalo, and *consigliere* John Tartamella. In 1908, when Carlo Costantino provided bail to Girolamo Asaro, the Partinicesi and Camporealesi were seemingly the Family's primary powerbase but they coexisted with the Castellammaresi. Costantino and his cousin Passananti both left America later that decade and died in Italy.

Mangiaracina (L) & Mano (R) were killed during the same period.

Records show that Antonio Bagarozy, despite the "y" in his name, was the correct spelling used by a man (b. 1873) who lived in Manhattan and later lived in the Bronx. Bagarozy's relationship to underworld heavyweights like Carlo Costantino and Girolamo Asaro is unclear despite his having posted Asaro's bail alongside Costantino. Bagarozy worked as a theater agent on Broadway and came from the Basilicata region, making a mafia connection to Asaro far less substantial than Costantino. Bagarozy owned property on Elizabeth Street where Asaro lived for a time so that may be how the men were acquainted. The insular nature of Sicilian mafiosi aside, research into early

Cosa Nostra figures often reveals them to be adept at forming friendships and business partnerships even outside of their mafia bubble, extending to Italians from other regions in addition to non-Italians.

The Bonanno Family at the time of Girolamo Asaro's 1908 arrest was not truly the "Castellammarese Family" as it was described by the *campanilismo*-filled Joe Bonanno but Castellammaresi like Salvatore Saracino and Sebastiano DiGaetano were still leading members of the era. DiGaetano became boss of the Family after Paolo Orlando stepped down around the end of the decade and even served as an interim *capo dei capi* following the arrest of Giuseppe Morello before stepping down in favor of Salvatore D'Aquila of the future Gambino Family around 1912. Nicolo Schiro also replaced DiGaetano as Family *rappresentante* around the same time. Secret Service informants detailed DiGaetano's role in high-level affairs during the several years he was atop the national mafia structure, holding meetings with visiting mafiosi from other American cities, dictating policy to other members, and helping direct the leaderless Morello Family prior to the election of their new boss in 1912.

DiGaetano was the first known Castellammarese boss in New York.

Of the six confirmed national *capi* between 1901 and 1931, two were Castellammarese, Sebastiano DiGaetano and Salvatore Maranzano. Another Trapanese example was 1930 interim *capo dei capi* Gaspare Messina of Boston who came from Salemi and had roots in the Bonanno orbit himself, living in Williamsburg before Boston and living again in New York City for a period where he again associated with Bonanno figures. Castellammare del Golfo is the only town to have produced more than one *capo dei capi* during the known history of the American mafia and Trapani is similarly the only province to produce three national *capi*. All three of these Trapanese names in turn were part of the Bonanno Family's immediate network.

Salvatore Saracino appears in a photograph with Salvatore Bonanno taken circa 1908 or 1909 that appears in Joe Bonanno's book, Bonanno describing Saracino as an important mafioso in New York at the time. Saracino was also one of the defendants in the notorious counterfeiting case against Giuseppe Morello and Ignazio Lupo under the alias "Giuseppe Palermo" during the first decade of the 1900s, cooperator Antonio Comito testifying that "Palermo" was

an investor in the operation who acted as an esteemed peer of Morello and Lupo, indicating he held rank even if he was not an official *rappresentante* like Morello and Lupo. Under his "Palermo" alias, Saracino claimed to be from Partanna but indeed he was actually from Castellammare del Golfo.

Like his partners, Saracino too received a stiff prison sentence after being convicted in the counterfeiting case in 1910. The formative Bonanno Family at this time was a nexus of mafiosi from the broader regional villages of Camporeale, Partinico, Castellammare, and other nearby *comuni* along the Trapani-Palermo border rather than an organization specific to one of these *compaesani* groups but the Castellammaresi were nonetheless influential at the time as evidenced by Salvatore Saracino and Sebastiano DiGaetano. Camporeale was then still part of Trapani province but a simple look at a map of Sicily shows the regional proximity between the towns that informed early Bonanno membership.

Just as Girolamo Asaro had his bail posted by Carlo Costantino, Asaro can be connected to his *compaesano* Salvatore Saracino in that he was arrested at 237 Elizabeth Street. Though this location was said to be a saloon when Asaro was arrested there, Saracino reportedly lived at this exact address and his relatives the Minores lived across the street at 234 Elizabeth. Asaro previously lived at 243 Elizabeth in 1905 which is a few doors down from the saloon and his address in 1908 was directly around the corner near Prince Street and Elizabeth. Whether the saloon was operated by Saracino or otherwise attached to his residence, this location provides a direct link between the two prominent Castellammarese mafiosi.

Saracino (pictured) and Asaro both operated around Elizabeth & Prince.

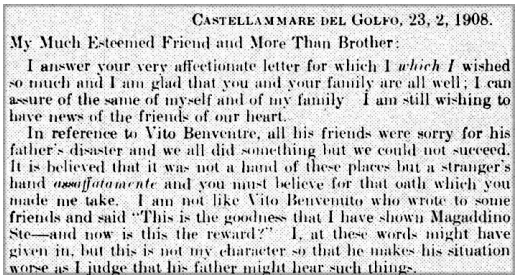
It's unknown if the saloon Girolamo Asaro ran on Elizabeth Street was the same one he was arrested in at Salvatore Saracino's address, Asaro being seated as a patron when confronted by Joe Petrosino, but Asaro's simple presence at the location substantiates a connection between the two men. Girolamo Asaro can be directly connected to contemporary Bonanno leaders Carlo Costantino and Salvatore Saracino, Asaro's name thus deserving mention alongside Saracino and Sebastiano DiGaetano as an early Bonanno

figure from Castellammare del Golfo in New York. A search of his belongings obtained evidence that he too was a leading voice in Castellammarese mafia affairs while living in America.

A Letter from the Elder Stefano Magaddino

A letter found in Girolamo Asaro's possession following his 1908 arrest was from "M.Stefano" and this individual addressed Asaro as "My much esteemed friend and more than brother." Stefano stated he was still waiting for news from "friends of our heart." This language is a typical example of how mafiosi of the era addressed other mafia members via letter, these writings naturally written originally in Italian or Sicilian dialect but always showing performative affection and use of fraternal language that comes through even after translation.

The primary purpose of the letter from "M.Stefano" was to discuss an issue between Vito Bonventre and Stefano. Stefano, the writer, states that his “friends were sorry for [Bonventre's] father's disaster" and adds that "we all did something but we could not succeed." Stefano states that whatever happened to Bonventre's father was "not a hand of these places but a stranger's hand." Stefano was referring to some offense done toward Vito Bonventre's father, possibly violence, and is seemingly asserting that it was done by outsiders and not the Castellammaresi. The truthfulness of this statement is questionable, however, as the rest of the letter clarified that Vito Bonventre was not in Stefano’s good graces.



CASTELLAMMARE DEL GOLFO, 23, 2, 1908.

My Much Esteemed Friend and More Than Brother:

I answer your very affectionate letter for which I *which I* wished so much and I am glad that you and your family are all well; I can assure of the same of myself and of my family I am still wishing to have news of the friends of our heart.

In reference to Vito Benventre, all his friends were sorry for his father's disaster and we all did something but we could not succeed. It is believed that it was not a hand of these places but a stranger's hand *assaffatamente* and you must believe for that oath which you made me take. I am not like Vito Benvenuto who wrote to some friends and said "This is the goodness that I have shown Magaddino Ste—and now is this the reward?" I, at these words might have given in, but this is not my character so that he makes his situation worse as I judge that his father might hear such things.

Relevant names appear in a letter sent to Asaro from Castellammare.

Strikingly, Stefano said "you must believe for that oath you had me take," indicating Asaro may have sponsored Stefano into the mafia or otherwise presided over his induction. He continued, telling Asaro that he (Stefano) is "not like Vito Bonventre" and refers to a letter some “friends” received from Bonventre. Stefano quotes Bonventre as saying that he, Bonventre, had shown goodness to "Magaddino Ste-" and was not rewarded. Stefano told Asaro that he did not "give in" to these remarks due to his own character, feeling Bonventre's remarks made the latter’s character look worse.

It is clear from the context of the above statement that "Magaddino Ste-" is self-referential to the writer of the letter, who also signs his name "M.Stefano". It was common for Italians to put their last name or its initial first, so we can deduce that the writer is named Stefano Magaddino. This is not Joe Bonanno's well-known cousin Stefano Magaddino (b. 1891), the future Buffalo boss, then just a teenager, but Joe Bonanno's older “uncle” Stefano Magaddino (b. 1866) who is discussed at length by Bonanno in his autobiography. Joe Bonanno was related to the Magaddinos through his maternal grandmother, the sister of the elder Stefano Magaddino, making “Uncle Stefano” his great-uncle.

“Uncle Stefano” Magaddino wrote to Asaro in New York.

Joe Bonanno described his great-uncle Stefano Magaddino as a fierce, authoritarian figure who initially served as an aide to Bonanno’s uncle Peppe, the two supposedly serving prison time on an island off the coast of Sicily until late 1899. In Bonanno’s account, Salvatore Bonanno assumed the role of clan leader after Peppe’s murder in 1899, Salvatore then marrying Uncle Stefano’s niece Caterina Bonventre in 1904. When Salvatore Bonanno left for the United States around 1908, Uncle Stefano Magaddino became the leader of the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan in Castellammare. 1908 is the year of Magaddino’s letter to Girolamo Asaro, so based on Joe Bonanno’s timeline this would mean Uncle Stefano was by then a high-ranking member in Castellammare, possibly a *capodecina* given Bonanno consistently refers to the clan “leader” position as a singular role with a clear succession.

In the letter, Magaddino requests that Asaro send a message to Vito Bonventre telling him to "learn to speak before he attempts to fool me," indicating Bonventre was in New York alongside Asaro. He also refers to Bonventre as a "venomous goat" and mentions Bonventre's attempts to "mollify" Magaddino. He states that if Bonventre returns to Italy "he will fix all of which he is accused" and "then will come the hour for settling accounts," an apparent threat. Given the earlier reference to Bonventre's father suffering a "disaster" at someone's hand, we can speculate that this branch of the Bonventre family was in conflict with others in Castellammare, including

Uncle Stefano Magaddino even though Magaddino denies involvement in the “disaster” and claims to have attempted mediation.

Much as the recurring name of Stefano Magaddino requires clarification to determine who is being referred to, the Vito Bonventre referred to here is not Joe Bonanno's uncle Vito Bonventre (b. 1891), who was still a teenager at this time and a nephew of Magaddino; that Vito Bonventre would also coincidentally marry Girolamo Asaro's daughter in New York. This is certainly a reference to the other, older Vito Bonventre (b. 1875) who was killed during the early stages of the Castellammarese War in 1930 and, as Magaddino suggests in the letter, was living in New York alongside Asaro at this time. Bonventre was among the more prominent Castellammaresi in NYC during the first decades of the 20th century as well as a leading "Good Killers" figure along with the younger Stefano Magaddino, Uncle Stefano’s nephew. Though Bartolo Fontana identified Vito Bonventre as the primary leader of the “Good Killers” group and was confirmed by Joe Bonanno as a *capodecina*, Magaddino the nephew offered a vague anecdote on his 1960s FBI bug indicating he too once held the rank of *capodecina* prior to becoming Buffalo boss, this perhaps dating back to his time in the future Bonanno Family.

Magaddino (L) & Bonventre (R) were both “Good Killers” leaders.

The elder Vito Bonventre's father was Gaspare, so the father who suffered the "disaster" referenced early in the letter would be named Gaspare Bonventre although it is difficult to confirm his fate. Though not as closely related to Uncle Stefano Magaddino as the younger Vito Bonventre, these Bonventres were extended relatives of the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan and Joe Bonanno refers to Vito as a “second cousin” in his book. Vito Bonventre’s namesake grandfather Vito was actually the brother of Joe Bonanno’s great-grandfather Giuseppe Bonventre, himself grandfather to the younger Vito Bonventre who married Girolamo Asaro’s daughter.

Bonanno shared an anecdote in his memoir that identified the elder Vito Bonventre as a *capodecina* under Nicolo Schiro in the mid-1920s who mediated a sitdown between soldier Salvatore Maranzano and his associate Joe Bonanno after the latter ran into a dispute with Castellammarese Bonanno

member Domenico “Mimi” Sabella, whose brother was Philadelphia *rappresentante* Salvatore Sabella. The sitdown was attended by Salvatore Sabella as well as the younger Stefano Magaddino from Buffalo, a relative of both Bonanno and the Sabellas and by then a boss himself. Much as the clan’s ally Maranzano seemingly reported to Bonventre, perhaps all of the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre relatives in Brooklyn at the time belonged to Vito Bonventre’s *decina*. Mimi Sabella was not represented by a different *capodecina*, Vito Bonventre seemingly the only NYC-based leader at the meeting, so he was presumably part of the crew as well. Bonanno’s recollections of contemporary Williamsburg suggest Magaddino cousins the DiGregorios were other members in Bonventre’s crew.

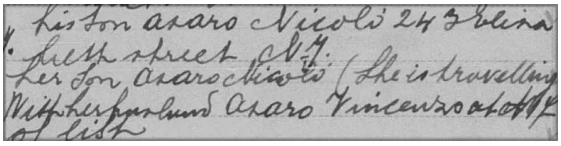
Castellammare-born Cesare Bonventre of the 1970s and ‘80’s Bonanno Family descended from a branch of this Bonventre line, researcher Ben Sangster discovering that Cesare’s grandfather Francesco was the younger brother of the Vito Bonventre born in 1875. Much as the mafioso Buccellatos share a common root, so do most of the mafia Bonventres from Castellammare del Golfo. Cesare was born and raised in Castellammare, ultimately arriving to New York in the 1960s after his father’s passing. It’s unknown if Cesare’s father, grandfather, or other relatives were directly involved in Cosa Nostra but he nonetheless came from a mafia clan that placed membership in close proximity.

Cesare (pictured) came from Vito Bonventre’s line.

Girolamo Asaro had a marital relation to the older Vito Bonventre in addition to his daughter’s marriage to the younger one from the Magaddino clan. Girolamo and his sons Mariano and Giuseppe were already in New York when they were joined by Girolamo's wife Rosalie and remaining children in 1905. On the same ship with Rosalie and the children was a Vincenzo Asaro (b. 1860) and his family, including children with the same names as Girolamo's own offspring. Vincenzo, his wife, and children were heading to their son “Nicolo Asaro” who was living at 243 Elizabeth Street and Girolamo's own wife and children were said to be joining Girolamo at the same address. Vincenzo Asaro

was Girolamo's younger brother and previously visited New York in 1903, arriving to a cousin named Carlo (last name illegible) at 247 Elizabeth, a possible reference to their cousin Carlo Asaro.

Vincenzo Asaro's sons Mariano and Giuseppe eventually lived in the Williamsburg Castellammarese community though the existence of a son named "Nicolo Asaro", referenced as Vincenzo's arrival contact in 1905 and living with Girolamo Asaro in Manhattan, cannot be substantiated. It's unlikely Vincenzo would have named his eldest son Nicolo even if such a son did exist given first-born sons are named for their grandfather and the eldest confirmed son of Vincenzo Asaro is named Mariano like his father. One of his daughters did marry a Nicolo Buccellato (b. 1881) whose father was named Giovanni like Martino and Felice's father from the 1896 investigation. Dr. James Buccellato is unfamiliar with any Buccellato brothers from that generation named Nicolo; Felice Buccellato's mafioso son was named Nicolo but derived his name from Felice's father-in-law. Vincenzo Asaro's son-in-law Nicolo Buccellato moved his family to the San Jose area after leaving New York in the 1910s where Nicolo died in the late 1930s.



Alleged nephew "Nicolo Asaro" was living with Girolamo in 1905.

It's possible "Nicolo Asaro" was actually Nicolo Buccellato and he was living with Girolamo Asaro in 1905, a possible match for Nicolo Buccellato arriving the year prior and Girolamo's close association with Martino Buccellato in 1896 demonstrating an existing relationship between the clans in addition to Nicolo becoming a marital nephew. Vincenzo Asaro's other children married into interesting names, his son Mariano wedding a Spadaro and his other son Giuseppe marrying a Giallo, both surnames relevant to the 19th century Castellammarese mafia as well as the 20th century Bonanno Family. However, it is not the names Buccellato, Spadaro, and Giallo that were relevant to Uncle Stefano Magaddino's 1908 letter to Girolamo Asaro, rather it was Vincenzo Asaro's relation to the Bonventres.

Vincenzo Asaro's wife, Girolamo's sister-in-law, was Illuminata DiSalvo and her sister married Vito Bonventre, the early Bonanno captain. Vincenzo's wife's brother in turn married Bonventre's sister and another sister married Bonventre's brother Sebastiano. The DiSalvos' mother was an Iracani like Girolamo Asaro's wife Rosalia. This multi-pronged relation to Vito Bonventre may shed light on Uncle Stefano Magaddino's letter to Girolamo Asaro

outlining various issues relating to these Bonventres, including the "disaster" that impacted Vito's father and Magaddino's grievances against Vito himself. It's possible that as a marital relative of the Bonventres, Girolamo was expected to mediate or otherwise involve himself in these matters pertaining to members of his extended clan. That Girolamo's own daughter married Vito Bonventre's cousin, also named Vito Bonventre, connects the Asaros to two branches of the Bonventre tree.

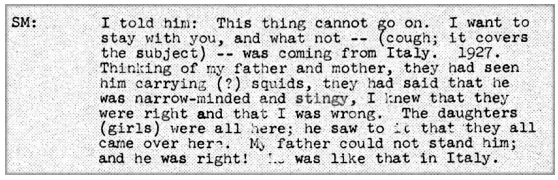
Uncle Stefano Magaddino's comments further confirm that this Vito Bonventre was not held in high favor by the Magaddino-Bonventre-Bonanno clan despite being a "second cousin". In his autobiography, Joe Bonanno said Bonventre was in consideration to replace Nicolo Schiro as boss in 1930 but Bonventre was considered a poor candidate by the younger Stefano Magaddino, Uncle Stefano's nephew. Bonanno quotes Magaddino as saying that Vito Bonventre was "weak and loves his money too much." The younger Stefano Magaddino and Bonventre both held leading roles in the "Good Killers" murder spree a decade earlier and coexisted as leaders in the Castellammarese network but there was apparently bad blood between them that also dated back to the previous generation of Magaddinos. Bonventre's murder in July 1930 nullified any concerns related to his leadership ability, Joe Bonanno attributing his death to Joe Masseria.

Both Stefano Magaddinos spoke ill of Vito Bonventre (pictured).

Tangentially, this multi-generational disdain was true of Maranzano and some of the Magaddinos as well even though Bonanno identified Maranzano as a loyalist of the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan who once assisted with their war against the Buccellatos. Maranzano himself told Joe Bonanno that Uncle Stefano Magaddino had been his "teacher", perhaps an indication that Magaddino sponsored Maranzano into the Castellammare Family. However, Joe Bonanno made numerous comments about the contentious relationship between Maranzano and the younger Stefano Magaddino.

The younger Magaddino himself confirms this on a 1965 FBI bug, telling a comical story about his family running into Maranzano while the latter was carrying squid back in Castellammare del Golfo. A young Stefano was warned

by his father Giovanni that Maranzano was “narrow-minded and stingy” and Stefano recalled that Giovanni Magaddino “could not stand” Maranzano. The nephew also indicates on the same tape that Salvatore Maranzano transferred membership from the Buffalo Family to the future Bonannos at one point and showed indecision about where he wanted to belong, other accounts confirming Maranzano owned property in Buffalo-controlled Hamilton. He also gave a Buffalo address after a 1925 firearm arrest. Joe Bonanno too was initially an associate of the Buffalo Family after arriving in America.



SM: I told him: This thing cannot go on. I want to stay with you, and what not -- (cough; it covers the subject) -- was coming from Italy. 1927. Thinking of my father and mother, they had seen him carrying (?) squids, they had said that he was narrow-minded and stingy, I knew that they were right and that I was wrong. The daughters (girls) were all here; he saw to it that they all came over here. My father could not stand him; and he was right! He was like that in Italy.

Two generations of Magaddinos also despised Maranzano.

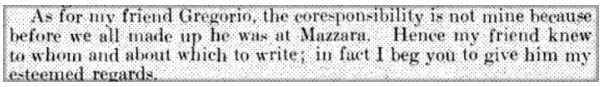
Much as young Stefano inherited his misgivings toward Salvatore Maranzano from his father, both Stefano Magaddino the uncle and nephew had a low opinion of Vito Bonventre. The Magaddinos were not without their own internal issues either, as Joe Bonanno said that his great-uncles Stefano and Giuseppe Magaddino didn’t get along with their brother Giovanni and this extended to the latter’s son Stefano, A *Man of Honor* recounting the deep animosity between Uncle Stefano and his namesake nephew.

Uncle Stefano Magaddino’s letter to Asaro apparently extended beyond mafia politics internal to Castellammare del Golfo. Magaddino referred to a "friend" named "Gregorio" in the letter, declaring how "the coresponsibility is not mine because before we all made up he was at Mazzara,” adding that “my friend knew whom and about which to write.” Magaddino asks Asaro to give this Gregorio his “esteemed regards”, confirming Gregorio too was in the United States. The mention of "coresponsibility" indicates their “friend” Gregorio is a contemporary mafia affiliate and the context suggests Magaddino has a favorable opinion of Gregorio but can’t take responsibility for him because Gregorio is affiliated with another Sicilian *borgata*, the “Mazzara” reference indicating this is Mazara del Vallo, another Trapani town.

The 1909 letter from Corleonese *capo dei capi* Giuseppe Morello to Chicago *capo* Rosario DiSpenza from Ciminna indicated that early mafia protocol required US-based members to consult with hometown *paesani* when inducting a member from a given Sicilian locale and this could be a variation of that principle. Magaddino denies “coresponsibility” for Gregorio but connects him to Mazara then indicates someone else will need to be written to. A plausible theory is that the mysterious Gregorio was a relatively recent

arrival to the United States who was attempting a transfer into the pan-Trapanese Family in New York that would come to be called the Bonanno Family.

Numerous sources detailed the transfer process in the early mafia, Nicola Gentile most prominently. Among his many transfers, Gentile transferred from Porto Empedocle into the Schiro-led Bonanno Family at one point in the early 1920s and only after arriving back in New York did he send a telegram requesting a transfer letter from his boss back in Sicily. Later cooperators like Colombo member Greg Scarpa made reference to transfer letters too even though transfers in and out of New York Families were extremely rare during his time, this process used primarily in other American cities. Scarpa's friend Nicholas Bianco from New England did however transfer to the Colombo Family during Scarpa's cooperation and then transferred back to the Patriarca Family years later. Much as Giuseppe Morello told DiSpenza that hometown *compaesani* must be contacted before initiating a member, Magaddino could be clarifying that a transfer or other advocacy on Gregorio's behalf couldn't be done through the Castellammaresi and instead required the Mazara Family's involvement, Magaddino also seeming to suggest their "friend" should know who to contact in this regard.


As for my friend Gregorio, the coresponsibility is not mine because before we all made up he was at Mazzara. Hence my friend knew to whom and about which to write; in fact I beg you to give him my esteemed regards.

References to a "Gregorio" hint at mafia formalities and protocol.

Magaddino also referred to his nephew "Salvatore" in the letter to Asaro but said he couldn't "take the liberty" to discuss him at the time of writing. This could be a reference to Salvatore Bonanno, father of Joe, who married Magaddino's niece Caterina Bonventre, making Salvatore his marital nephew. In his book, Joe Bonanno says his father stepped into a prominent role in the local mafia around 1899 after the deaths of brothers Stefano and Giuseppe and implies that his father was involved in the murders of two Buccellatos before eventually coming to New York.

Salvatore Bonanno was in New York by March of 1908 when he was joined by his wife Caterina, son Joe, and brother-in-law Pietro Bonventre. Given Magaddino was not at "liberty" to discuss his nephew Salvatore in detail, if this was in reference to Salvatore Bonanno it may have related to his involvement in mafia activity. Joe Bonanno's photograph of his father with Salvatore Saracino around the time of the 1908 letter confirms Salvatore Bonanno's close relationship to the upper ranks of the Castellammarese faction in New York at the time. After the early deaths of Salvatore Bonanno and his wife

Caterina back in Sicily during the 1910s, Uncle Stefano Magaddino would become Joe Bonanno's primary father figure and mafia mentor.

Uncle Stefano sends regards to a "Don Filippo" in the letter but provided no other identifying information and similarly sends "much esteem" and "regards from all our people" to Girolamo Asaro himself. Magaddino's brother was also planning to send his "heartfelt salutations" to Asaro; Magaddino had two brothers: Giuseppe and Giovanni. Giovanni was the father of the well-known Buffalo boss Stefano Magaddino, though Joe Bonanno claimed Giovanni Magaddino was not close to Uncle Stefano. On the other hand, Bonanno said Giuseppe Magaddino was like a "counselor" to Uncle Stefano, so this may be the brother referred to here.

Giuseppe Magaddino's own sons were noteworthy figures, son Gaspare serving as a later boss of Castellammare del Golfo before coming to New York and becoming a suspected gunman in the 1967 Cypress Gardens triple murder during the 1960s Bonanno war before being killed himself in 1970. Giuseppe's other son Pietro was a Buffalo member who transferred to the Bonanno Family. Both of Giuseppe Magaddino's sons sided with cousin Joe Bonanno during the 1960s conflict despite their other cousin Stefano Magaddino opposing Bonanno. Gaspare Magaddino's son Giuseppe followed his father and grandfather into the Castellammare Family and surfaced in investigations into the 1980s while remaining in Sicily.

Gaspare Magaddino was another of Uncle Stefano's nephews.

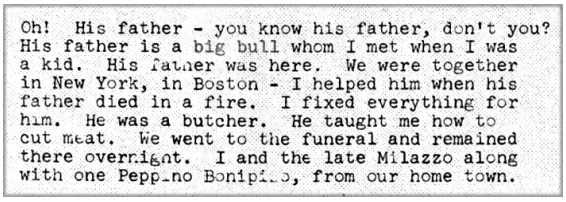
Uncle Stefano Magaddino closed the letter by calling Girolamo Asaro his "affectionate friend and more than a brother," again using fraternal language that reinforces their mutual mafia membership. The Magaddino-Asaro letter is a treasure trove of information. Though vague at times, it appears to be entirely focused on mafia affairs and the complex politics at play within the international Castellammarese mafia network. Much as Martino Buccellato was said to have proven himself worthy of membership during the 1896 Costa murder under Girolamo Asaro's supervision, Magaddino's reference to taking an oath under Asaro's direction suggests Asaro similarly played a role in Magaddino's entry into the Castellammare Family.

The letter confirms that Asaro remained an important figure among his *compaesani* in Sicily and served as a point of contact and mediator for Castellammarese mafiosi in NYC while being kept up to date on mafia activity in his hometown, these details naturally relevant to the extensive clan relationships in both countries. That Asaro was corresponding with Uncle Stefano Magaddino further underscores the continuous nature of the Castellammarese mafia between 1896 and 1908. This letter and the marriage of Asaro's daughter to Magaddino's nephew Vito Bonventre also demonstrates the close relationship between the two clans during this era. The nature of the letter, which includes discussion of a volatile dispute involving Vito Bonventre and his father along with administrative matters pertaining to "Gregorio", suggest that Girolamo Asaro was a high-ranking member of the future Bonanno Family in New York City.

A Tragic Death in Boston

Buffalo boss Stefano Magaddino referred to the elder Girolamo Asaro in a January 1965 FBI recording while meeting with Bonanno leaders Paul Sciacca and an unidentified elderly member, possibly *capodecina* Nicolo Alfano. The latter two men were serving on a ruling panel after Joe Bonanno was deposed as boss months earlier and ostensibly visited Magaddino seeking his advice before electing Gaspare DiGregorio to replace Bonanno, DiGregorio a blood and marital relative of Stefano. Sciacca had heritage in Salemi, another area of Trapani that produced generations of Bonanno members, while Alfano, if indeed he was the other man, was an elder statesman from an obscure branch of Agrigentino mafiosi who also belonged to the Bonanno Family. The recording included fascinating anecdotes beyond the Bonanno conflict alone, including references to many names and events relevant to this article.

During a general discussion of the Asaros, Magaddino says the elder Girolamo Asaro had once been "here", meaning the United States, and that Magaddino and Girolamo's son Vincenzo were "together" in both New York and Boston. Magaddino references Girolamo's death in a house fire and how he attended Asaro's funeral with future Detroit boss Gaspare Milazzo, another "Good Killers" alum who previously lived in Brooklyn, as well as "Peppino Bonipito" [ph]. The FBI often butchered Italian names on tape transcriptions, the names likely difficult to hear, and given the lack of further context it's impossible to determine who "Bonipito" is, but one candidate is Giuseppe Bonventre, a Magaddino cousin and brother of Girolamo Asaro's son-in-law Vito Bonventre. Giuseppe Bonventre was referenced earlier in the article as his mother-in-law was originally an Ingoglia.

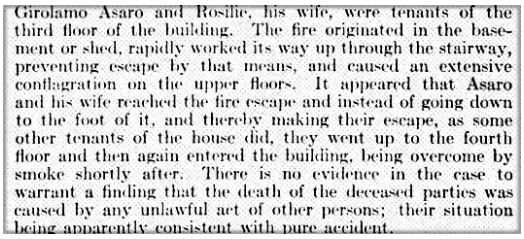


Oh! His father - you know his father, don't you? His father is a big bull whom I met when I was a kid. His father was here. We were together in New York, in Boston - I helped him when his father died in a fire. I fixed everything for him. He was a butcher. He taught me how to cut meat. We went to the funeral and remained there overnight. I and the late Milazzo along with one Peppino Bonipi..., from our home town.

Magaddino references Girolamo Asaro dying in a house fire.

As an example of how mangled Italian names could become in writing, the Asaro name was was transcribed as “Uase” in the same conversation but the specific remarks made by Magaddino make it clear he is discussing not only Girolamo but multiple generations of Asaros throughout the conversation. In conversations I’ve had with former Bonanno associate Frank Fiordilino from Castellammare, a former associate of the 1990s Asaro crew, his pronunciation of “Asaro” could compare to “Uase” if it were captured on a primitive 1960s tape recording. A 1960s FBI informant also knew Girolamo’s son Vincenzo Asaro by the phonetic name “Don Vincenzo Urrzo” [ph].

Magaddino's references to both New York and Boston in connection with the Asaros is supported by documentation. While Girolamo Asaro lived on Prince Street in NYC at the time of his 1908 arrest, he and his family moved to the Boston area sometime after his exoneration, where death records confirm Magaddino's account that Girolamo Asaro died of partial incineration in a January 1912 house fire. The Asaros were at that time living at 10 Willard Street in “Boston” which is technically in Quincy, south of the city. An account of the tragedy described how the Asaros lived on the third floor of the building and the fire began in a basement or shed, the inferno carrying up through the rest of the building. Girolamo and his wife made it to the fire escape but reentered the home on the fourth floor and were overcome with smoke thus unable to escape. Other tenants did flee the home and the fire was deemed accidental.



Girolamo Asaro and Rosilie, his wife, were tenants of the third floor of the building. The fire originated in the basement or shed, rapidly worked its way up through the stairway, preventing escape by that means, and caused an extensive conflagration on the upper floors. It appeared that Asaro and his wife reached the fire escape and instead of going down to the foot of it, and thereby making their escape, as some other tenants of the house did, they went up to the fourth floor and then again entered the building, being overcome by smoke shortly after. There is no evidence in the case to warrant a finding that the death of the deceased parties was caused by any unlawful act of other persons; their situation being apparently consistent with pure accident.

The Asaros couldn’t escape the multi-floor fire.

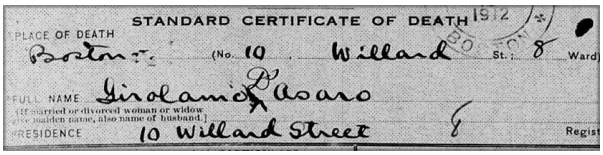
Girolamo's eldest son Mariano "Morris" Asaro was also living in Boston at this time, as evidenced by the birth of a son, though he would be in NYC by 1915. Son Giuseppe was also there, his initial naturalization application filed in Boston in 1911. It’s not clear if his other son Vincenzo was living in Boston but Magaddino indicates Vincenzo at least traveled there for his parents’ funeral.

Youngest son Michele, still a teenager, was presumably still living with his parents at the time. One of his daughters had already married and was living in New York while the other, Brigida, may have been with them in Boston.

Girolamo Asaro was buried at St. Michael Cemetery in Boston. Stefano Magaddino claimed he helped Asaro's son Vincenzo in the aftermath of his father's death and that he, Magaddino, "fixed everything" for Vincenzo, suggesting the young Magaddino assisted in the funeral arrangements or other details related to Girolamo's death. Magaddino of course would later operate a successful funeral parlor in Niagara Falls as Buffalo boss beginning in the late 1930s. The recording of Magaddino where he discussed the Asaros was made in the office of this business.

On the same 1965 recording, Magaddino states that Girolamo or his son Vincenzo was a butcher who taught Magaddino how to cut meat, it being difficult to decipher exactly who he was referring to. What's known of Girolamo's employment shows him to have been a self-employed saloon operator and store owner when he lived in New York, dealing in wine, then working as a "laborer" in Boston. Later records show that Vincenzo Asaro was consistently employed in the garment industry, so if he was the butcher referred to by Magaddino, he did not stay in that trade.

The "heat" from Girolamo Asaro's Italian murder conviction and 1908 arrest by NYC detectives likely impacted his move to Boston. Asaro was released on bail and the Kingdom of Italy was attempting to appeal the US government's decision not to deport him, his past as a fugitive and the attention he received from the arrest likely prompting Asaro to leave NYC for another location. Boston otherwise had no known connections to Castellammarese mafia activity specifically but it was once relevant to the Bonanno Family and the wider Trapanese network.


STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH 1912

PLACE OF DEATH Boston (No. 10 Willard St. 8 Ward

FULL NAME Girolamo D'Asaro

RESIDENCE 10 Willard Street

Girolamo Asaro was living in the Boston area at his time of death.

Future Boston *capo* Gaspare Messina was from Salemi and living in Williamsburg at the time Asaro lived in Boston. Messina is believed to have been a member of the early Bonanno Family given his Trapani origins and association with future Bonanno figures. He moved to Boston in the mid-1910s and by the early 1920s Nicola Gentile confirms Messina was serving as the Boston boss. In addition to Messina, other mafiosi who took leading positions

in Boston in the years after Asaro's death included *consigliere* Francesco "Frank" Cucchiara and underboss Giuseppe "Joe" Lombardo, both from Salemi like Messina. Boston once had a large immigrant colony from this region of Trapani province, another sign that the early Boston Family had a significant element from Salemi and nearby towns even though relatively little is known of the formative membership.

Joe Lombardo had lived in Brooklyn like Messina prior to Boston and may have been an early Bonanno affiliate himself. Some writers make reference to Rhode Island-based "underboss" Henry Tameleo having transferred membership to New England from the Bonanno Family but do not include the source for this claim. An examination of Tameleo shows him to be a continuous resident of Rhode Island throughout his life and he was of mainland heritage like many of his peers in the Family's Providence faction. Well-known Boston informant and cooperating witness Vincent Teresa did claim Tameleo had a close friendship with Joe Bonanno and though Teresa provided a wealth of information on the New England Family he was a non-member and some of his claims are questionable if not erroneous. Teresa did claim to be from a mafia lineage, however, stating his grandfather was an early "Don" in "Palermo". The Teresas were specifically from Termini Imerese east of Palermo, another mafia stronghold believed to have informed the early Boston membership.

Colombo member informant Greg Scarpa was formally introduced to New England members while visiting Rhode Island for the funeral of New England / Colombo member Nicky Bianco's father in 1966 and among the men he met were Tameleo, who was introduced to Scarpa as a *capodecina*, and Lombardo, the latter introduced as the underboss. Tameleo went to prison a few years later and no member sources identified him as the underboss prior to his incarceration. It's unlikely that Henry Tameleo was ever the Family's official underboss, his role being perhaps a de facto "underboss" to the group's Providence faction, nor is there reason to believe the published claims that he transferred from the Bonanno Family. Lombardo was the confirmed New England underboss, however, and his roots in Brooklyn and Salemi like Messina suggest the claimed Bonanno transfer was referring to him rather than Tameleo who shows no outward signs of Bonanno affiliation at any point in his history.

Messina (L) & Lombardo (R) were part of the Trapanese network.

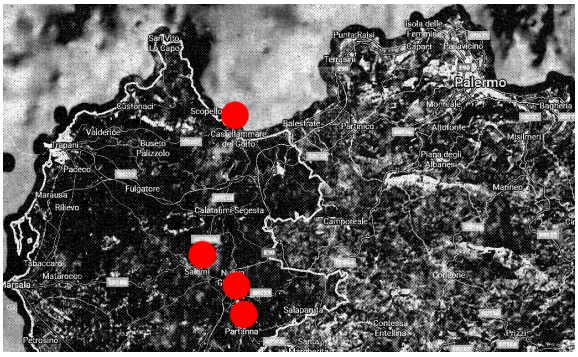
Williamsburg in the 1910s and ‘20s included a faction of mafiosi from Salemi and nearby Santa Ninfa led by Baldassare "Benny" Gallo, who had parents from both towns and was killed in 1930. The Bonanno Family has continued to induct and promote men with heritage in these *comuni* spanning its known existence, Partanna being another town in this region that produced generations of Bonanno members. The Grimaldis of the modern Bonanno Family have roots in Santa Ninfa; Grimaldi’s father Giuseppe was a former *capodecina* and both Vito and his son Joseph were identified as captains in the 2010s. Frank Fiordilino was mentored by Vito Grimaldi and recalls Grimaldi speaking fondly about Santa Ninfa despite being born in New York, the Grimaldis still very much in touch with their *compaesano* identity.

Paul Sciacca had heritage in Salemi and also married a woman from Santa Ninfa, Sciacca becoming the Bonanno *consigliere* soon after meeting with Magaddino in January 1965 then became *rappresentante* later in the decade. After stepping down as boss, Sciacca eventually reported to his *compaesano* Nicola “Nick the Battler” DeStefano, a captain by the later 1970s. Biagio Restivo from Partanna and his son Louis were also members from this region of Trapani who held captain positions at different points. Joseph DiMaria was another one-time acting captain with heritage in Santa Ninfa. Given the Family’s history of elevating members from Salemi, Santa Ninfa, and Partanna, Boston boss Gaspare Messina may have been an early *capodecina* within this element prior to his move to New England though his formal stature in New York is speculative.

Bonanno boss Paul Sciacca (pictured) was from Salemi.

The 1883 investigation into the “mafia” in Castellammare identified other “districts” in Trapani who worked alongside the Castellammare group, one of which was Salemi. These relationships between mafiosi in America did not begin in the United States but reflected existing collaboration and fraternization between mafia members from different towns in the same broader region. Virtually all mafiosi from Trapani province in the United States were connected in some way to the Orlando-Schiro-Maranzano-Bonanno powerbase in New York across generations. Like the tight-knit networks from other western Sicilian towns and provinces, the Trapanese network as a whole maintained close relationships across time and place, these different *compaesani* networks forming the collective backbone of the international mafia network.

As evidenced by the 1960s Detroit informant referenced in an earlier section, different *compaesani* groups often funneled into one centralized Family in America but retained a degree of political autonomy, sometimes as a formal *decina*. This process became less pronounced in the United States over time but echoes of the arrangement continued to exist in later decades. Sicilian *pentito* Leonardo Messina of San Cataldo (no relation to Gaspare) testified that he was told the formative American Families initially began as *decine* of their original Sicilian Family or “*paese*”. Messina acknowledged that his relatives had been members in San Cataldo for “seven generations”, placing them in a position to know how the American groups were formed given many older Sancataldesi became members in the United States, among them the Polizzis and Melis of Detroit. The two Sicilian Families in Venezuela similarly began as *decine* of the Siculiana and Santa Ninfa Families before gaining recognition as their own official *borgate* according to Tommaso Buscetta, reinforcing Leonardo Messina’s statement even though this occurred much later.



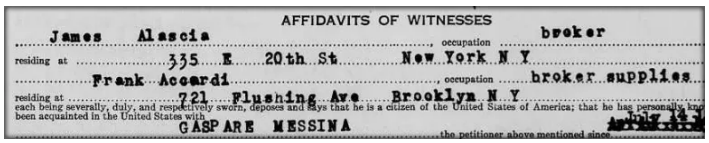
Salemi, Santa Ninfa, & Partanna (bottom) fell in with Castellammare (top).

A branch of the Giallo family from Castellammare settled in Massachusetts as well, living in Pittsfield on the far western side of the state but also Boston and as far north as Lawrence. Prolific bootlegger Bill Giallo in Brewster, NY,

had operations that stretched into Western Massachusetts and some of the Massachusetts Giallos were named Vito Giallo like him. The Asaros' presence in Boston can't be connected to the Giallos but Girolamo Asaro's niece married a Giallo in New York City and both names trace back to the 1896 Castellammare Family, Vito and Vincenzo Giallo assisting Martino Buccellato with the Giuseppe Costa murder under Asaro's supervision.

As evidenced by Joe Bonanno and Nicola Gentile's accounts, mafiosi tended to travel and move to places where they had existing connections. Girolamo Asaro's residence in Boston prior to the arrival of Messina and other Salemitano leaders indicates that the Trapanese pipeline to Boston goes back to the pre-Messina period where little is known about the make-up of the Boston organization. Rarely did mafiosi make "cold calls" when visiting or moving to a new area, usually joining a foundation already established by *paesani*, relatives, or existing mafia contacts, often all of the above. In those years many if not most mafiosi also formally transferred membership to the local area they moved to, which could indicate Girolamo Asaro was a member of the early Boston Family at the time of his 1912 death much as he presumably transferred to the Bonanno Family when he arrived to New York from Castellammare in the early 1900s.

Gaspare Messina is coincidentally mentioned by Stefano Magaddino during the same January 1965 conversation in which he discusses Girolamo Asaro, though the fleeting reference to Messina relates to his role as the acting *capo dei capi* during the Castellammarese War period and does not connect to Asaro. Seemingly still the Boston *rappresentante* at the time, Messina temporarily moved back to New York City for several years in the late 1920s and early 1930s, his naturalization witnessed by suspected Bonanno member James Alascia, a close associate of Salvatore Maranzano and native of Palermo province who was killed in 1932. The other witness was a Frank Accardi of Brooklyn, the latter's surname suggesting Trapanese origins, this name especially common in the provincial interior in and around Salemi.


AFFIDAVITS OF WITNESSES

James Alascia, occupation broker

residing at 335 E 20th St New York N Y

Frank Accardi, occupation broker supplies

residing at 721 Flushing Ave Brooklyn N Y

each being severally, duly, and respectively sworn, deposes and says that he is a citizen of the United States of America; that he has personally known the petitioner above mentioned since ... been acquainted in the United States with GASPARE MESSINA

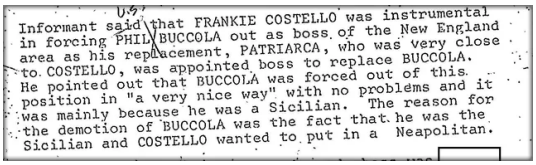
Maranzano associate James Alascia witnessed Messina's naturalization.

Messina's presence in New York does not mean he had to immediately abandon his *capo* position in Boston. Joe Bonanno lived primarily in Arizona for nearly twenty years while serving as a New York boss and Maranzano himself lived in Palermo while serving as *capoprovincia* of Trapani before

coming to the United States. Other examples in the United States and Sicily also exist showing bosses and members of any rank can live remotely while retaining their position in a given Family, even from a great distance. The DeCavalcante Family of New Jersey for example had an underboss who lived full-time in Connecticut and numerous remote *capidecine* existed in various Families throughout American mafia history.

Gaspare Messina did step down as boss in the early 1930s after serving as interim *capo dei capi* but he moved back to Boston where he remained in good standing as a senior member under his Palermitano successor Philip Bruccola. His *compaesani* Frank Cucchiaro and Joe Lombardo served as part of the administration decades later, showing the Salemitano roots of the organization remained even though the New England Family became overwhelmingly non-Sicilian over time. The Family's eventual boss Raymond Patriarca of Providence had heritage on the Italian mainland as did the majority of the Rhode Island membership. Many of the later Boston members too were non-Sicilian.

Interestingly, Patriarca was recorded on an FBI tape stating that he was initially inducted into the New York Genovese Family and later transferred to the local organization even though he is not known to have lived outside of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Patriarca also stated that other select New England members were initially made into the Genovese Family and transferred, the latter group also retaining its own *decina* in Springfield, MA, for generations. An FBI informant in New England reported that Patriarca's rise as boss following the departure of Bruccola in the mid-1950s occurred in part because Calabrian Genovese boss Frank Costello wished to have a "Neapolitan" in charge of the Family rather than a Sicilian; in another report, the same source claimed it was the Neapolitan Vito Genovese who wished to install Patriarca for the same reason. Though Patriarca briefly sat on the Commission himself after becoming boss, the Family was otherwise represented by the Genovese leadership who tended to represent the American mafia's Italian mainland networks, some of which were derived from early Campanian and Calabrian Camorra Societies.


Informant said that FRANKIE COSTELLO was instrumental in forcing PHIL BUCCOLA out as boss of the New England area as his replacement, PATRIARCA, who was very close to COSTELLO, was appointed boss to replace BUCCOLA. He pointed out that BUCCOLA was forced out of this position in "a very nice way" with no problems and it was mainly because he was a Sicilian. The reason for the demotion of BUCCOLA was the fact that he was the Sicilian and COSTELLO wanted to put in a Neapolitan.

New England later fell under the influence of mainland networks.

Prior to the "Americanization" of the New England Family, it is obvious that the organization's Boston wing derived significant influence from Trapani

province. As evidenced by the Teresas, there is also reason to believe towns along the eastern Palermo coast once produced Boston members, including Gaspare DiCola from Termini who is a speculative early boss prior to Gaspare Messina. Another Sicilian province that likely helped fill out the city's early membership is Agrigento, there being a large colony from Sciacca and neighboring towns in Boston. The Agrigento network's premier statesman, Nicola Gentile from Siculiana, once visited Boston where he was known and respected among the membership, Messina even holding a banquet in Gentile's honor although Gentile himself couldn't personally attend. We lack the inside sources to clarify exactly who and what the New England Family consisted of back then but the confirmed and suspected members as well as circumstantial leads suggest these areas were central to the initial Sicilian identity of the organization.

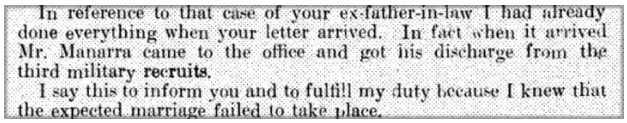
Magaddino's comments do nothing to connect Girolamo Asaro to Gaspare Messina nor do they clarify details relevant to the early Boston Family or what in particular brought Asaro there but his remarks show these old names were still relevant to Stefano Magaddino's memory of the early Trapanese mafia network across the United States, including Boston. Asaro's presence there reinforces the Trapanese influence in early Boston and could suggest he transferred membership to the formative Boston Family although it's equally possible he was a remote member of the Bonanno Family in New England, the mafia's internal rulebook allowing for either scenario. Girolamo Asaro's time in Boston was nonetheless short and ill-fated.

A Letter from Pietro Barone

Another letter in Girolamo's possession at the time of his 1908 arrest was from Pietro Barone in Castellammare. This letter made reference to Asaro's son Mariano, Barone commenting that Mariano Asaro would "do his best to make money" and "be like your right arm." Barone also mentions a "friend" named "Salvatore" and says it was "good fortune" for everyone that Girolamo Asaro arrived in America. Barone told Asaro that if he were 25 or 30 years younger he would move to America but because of his age he could not "do all that [he] wished to do" and as a result did not want to risk deportation.

Barone makes reference to a letter Asaro sent him regarding Asaro's "ex-father-in-law" but Barone says he'd "already done everything" before the receiving the letter. When the letter arrived, Barone says a "Mr. Manarra" went to "the office" where he was able to get discharged from the "third military recruits". Barone believed it was his "duty" to tell Asaro about these events because Barone had known about an "expected marriage that had failed to take place." These incredibly vague statements are hard to decipher,

Asaro not known to have married before Rosalia Iracani and it's not clear what the term "ex-father-in-law" was communicating or how it related to "Mr." Manarra" and some sort of military discharge. Neither can we shed any light on the ill-fated marriage referred to by Barone or why Barone feels particularly obligated to Asaro in context with these events. It's possible these are coded references to other matters or we are missing details about Girolamo Asaro's personal history.



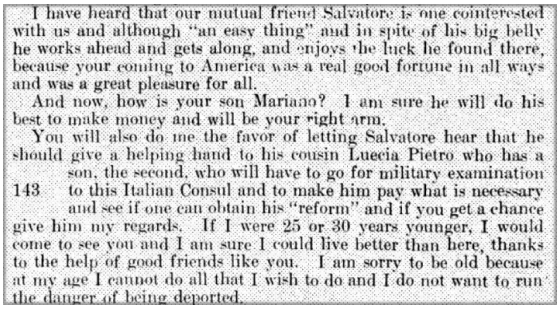
In reference to that case of your ex-father-in-law I had already done everything when your letter arrived. In fact when it arrived Mr. Manarra came to the office and got his discharge from the third military recruits.

I say this to inform you and to fulfill my duty because I knew that the expected marriage failed to take place.

Barone updated Asaro on matters related to Asaro's "ex-father-in-law".

Barone mentions a "mutual friend" named Salvatore multiple times in the letter. Barone remarks that Salvatore is "cointerested with us" and how despite being an "easy thing" with a "big belly", this Salvatore "works along", "gets ahead", and "enjoys the luck" he found in America. Barone hopes that Salvatore will assist a cousin named "Pietro Luecia" who has a son due for a "military examination" with the Italian Consul, Barone suggesting Salvatore should "pay" the necessary amount for his cousin's son's "reform". Barone closes the letter by sending his regards to both Mariano Asaro and "friend" Salvatore.

It is difficult to definitively identify "Salvatore" but knowing Girolamo Asaro was living and working alongside Salvatore Saracino, this may be a reference to him. Saracino was a prospering mafioso in New York whose photos show a man with a "big belly", assuming the statement was literal, and he was of the same generation as Asaro and Barone. However, a Pietro Barone also served as a witness to the birth of Joe Bonanno in 1905 which, if this is the same Barone, could mean "Salvatore" was Salvatore Bonanno who was by then in the US and likely referenced in the similar letter Asaro received from Uncle Stefano Magaddino. Salvatore Bonanno did not have a "big belly" though the phrase could have been used metaphorically.



I have heard that our mutual friend Salvatore is one cointerested with us and although "an easy thing" and in spite of his big belly he works ahead and gets along, and enjoys the luck he found there, because your coming to America was a real good fortune in all ways and was a great pleasure for all.

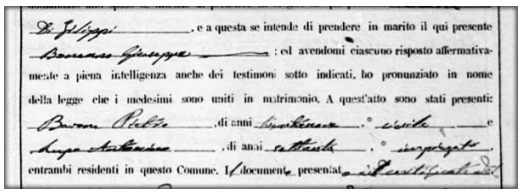
And now, how is your son Mariano? I am sure he will do his best to make money and will be your right arm.

You will also do me the favor of letting Salvatore hear that he should give a helping hand to his cousin Luecia Pietro who has a son, the second, who will have to go for military examination
143 to this Italian Consul and to make him pay what is necessary and see if one can obtain his "reform" and if you get a chance give him my regards. If I were 25 or 30 years younger, I would come to see you and I am sure I could live better than here, thanks to the help of good friends like you. I am sorry to be old because at my age I cannot do all that I wish to do and I do not want to run the danger of being deported.

Barone referred to Mariano Asaro and someone named "Salvatore".

Pietro Barone was seemingly a senior member of the Castellammare Family. The 1883 investigation into the Duke Calvino kidnapping in Castellammare noted a mafioso with the surname Barone, first name not given, who was mentioned in context with Peppe Bonanno and acting leader Paolo Valenti. Pietro Barone's acknowledgement of his senior age in the letter to Asaro adds to the possibility that he could be the Barone referenced in 1883, the Duke Calvino case also mentioning an Asaro who is similarly not identified beyond the surname though that Asaro was possibly from another part of the province. It's at least evident in Barone's letter that he is a mafioso himself.

Barone appears to have been more than a random aging mafioso in Castellammare, though. Along with a Pietro Barone serving as witness to the birth of Joe Bonanno in 1905, a Pietro Barone witnessed the 1894 wedding of Peppe Bonanno to Laura DiFilippi. This is all likely the same man who wrote the 1908 letter to Girolamo Asaro and reveals him to be close not only to the Asaros, apparently involving himself in family matters pertaining to Girolamo, but also an intimate friend of Peppe and Salvatore Bonanno. The Barone name is historically common in Castellammare and intersected with the local nobility, there being an assortment of Dons with the surname Barone. In addition to his association with upper class mafiosi like the Asaros and Bonannos, Pietro Barone is listed as a *civile* on Peppe Bonanno's marriage record, *civile* referring to an even higher social standing than *possidente*.



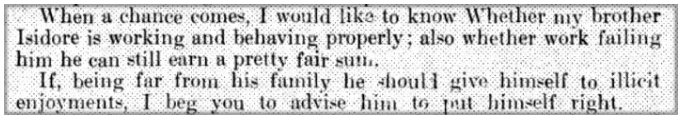
A Pietro Barone witnessed the marriage of Peppe Bonanno.

The 1908 letter mentions Barone having a brother named Isidore in New York, who Pietro hopes is working and "behaving properly". Barone was concerned that his brother would give in to "illicit enjoyments" given he was so far from his family and asked that Asaro help set Isidore straight. Immigration records confirm an Isidoro Barone (b. 1860) from Castellammare arrived to New York in 1906, placing him in New York at the time Girolamo Asaro received the letter from Pietro.

Isidoro Barone appears to have left America some time later then returned in 1911 where he remained until his death in Brooklyn in 1920. Isidoro's namesake son married a widow named Anna Spadaro Costa. Her father's name was Giacomo Spadaro, bringing to mind the mafioso of the same name from the 1883 investigation, and her deceased first husband was a Costa, like the 1896

murder victim Giuseppe Costa. Anna Spadaro's birth in 1886 would place her father in the right age range to have been the same Giacomo Spadaro from 1883 but documentation of the Duke Calvino affair did not include enough information to definitively identify Giacomo Spadaro beyond his name nor determine his exact age.

Pietro Barone said nothing about his brother Isidore/Isidoro to indicate the latter was a mafia member but Pietro was at least utilizing a contact in the mafia network, Girolamo Asaro, to monitor his brother's conduct. Isidoro Barone's wife was an Angela Lupo and in addition to a Pietro Barone witnessing the marriage of Peppe Bonanno and Laura DiFilippi, the other witness was an Antonino Lupo. This is the only time I've encountered the Lupo surname in Castellammarese mafia circles but it was evidently interrelated with the Barones and connected to Barone's friends the Bonannos.


When a chance comes, I would like to know Whether my brother Isidore is working and behaving properly; also whether work failing him he can still earn a pretty fair sum.
If, being far from his family he should give himself to illicit enjoyments, I beg you to advise him to put himself right.

Barone asked Asaro to keep an eye on his brother in New York.

Much as Uncle Stefano Magaddino outlined his grievances about Vito Bonventre and updated Girolamo Asaro on activities relevant to the mafia in Castellammare, the contact from Barone was of a similar nature although it was seemingly less administrative in tone and appears more personal in nature. As an old friend and *amico nostra*, Barone was touching base with Asaro about various matters of mutual interest while Magaddino and Asaro were discussing a volatile dispute with implications in New York and Castellammare as well as organizational protocol, the tone of their correspondence being that of fellow leaders within their own respective branches of the Castellammarese mafia network. The Barone letter provides interesting new leads but perhaps most importantly it includes the first known reference to one of Girolamo Asaro's children becoming involved with the organization.

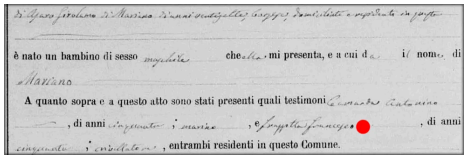
Mariano & Giuseppe Asaro

Girolamo's son Mariano Asaro has never been identified as a Bonanno member but the nature of the Pietro Barone letter, specifically Mariano becoming like his mafioso father's "right arm", puts a mafia spin on Mariano's presence in New York City while his father still lived there. Joe Bonanno similarly said he was told by Uncle Stefano Magaddino that he, Magaddino, had been the Bonanno clan's "right arm" in 19th century Castellammare. This is a common

phrase even outside of Cosa Nostra but in both cases it is used in context with the mafia, the "right arm" not necessarily being a made member but someone at least trusted to act in their superior's interest.

Mariano Asaro was born in 1886, entered New York around 1902, then spent a period in Boston sometime between 1908 and 1912. His parents' death in Boston prompted a move to the Castellammarese colony on New York's Lower East Side by 1914 where he worked as a garment presser. Many Castellammaresi, Asaros included, once lived in the area now referred to as the "East Village" though that designation came decades later. This article uses "East Village" at times for the sake of specificity but the neighborhood was still regarded as the Lower East Side when the Asaros lived there.

Mariano's wife was Rose Frazzitta, a native of Castellammare like him. The Frazzitta name is not otherwise linked to confirmed Castellammarese mafia members but Bill Feather's "Mafia Membership Charts" blog carries a Mariano Frazzitta (b. 1897) as a Bonanno member. Feather's work is a great reference point and he should be commended for the sheer scope of his efforts to identify all known initiated Cosa Nostra members but his lists are prone to occasional inaccuracies and it's unclear what research produced the name Mariano Frazzitta. I've been unable to find any references to Frazzitta as a Bonanno affiliate but I'm confident Feather found the name somewhere in connection with the Bonanno orbit even if Frazzitta was not a formal member. In addition to his wife, one of the witnesses to Mariano Asaro's 1886 birth was a Francesco Frazzitta, confirming the Asaros had existing links to the Frazzitta name prior to Mariano's marriage. Mariano Frazzitta's father Girolamo had a younger brother named Francesco but their relation to Asaro's father-in-law Melchiorre Frazzitta is undetermined, Melchiorre coming from a different father.


è nato un bambino di sesso maschile che mi presenta, e a cui d i nom di
Mariano
A quanto sopra e a questo atto sono stati presenti quali testimoni
, di anni , , e , di anni
, entrambi residenti in questo Comune.

Asaro's birth was witnessed by a Frazzitta and he later married one.

By 1917-18 Mariano Asaro was in the grocery business and living in Mount Vernon in Westchester County, an area not otherwise linked to the Castellammaresi. Mariano's siblings however would soon live in the area and Vito "Brewster Bill' Giallo spent a period in Mount Vernon circa 1930. The Giallos parallel the Asaros in multiple instances, Vito and Vincenzo Giallo assisting Girolamo Asaro with the Costa murder in 1896 Castellammare then younger Giallos associating with the Bonanno Family in New York, one Giallo

marrying Girolamo Asaro's niece, and a branch of the Giallos even settling in Massachusetts. Mariano Asaro was living in East Flatbush during the 1920s but by 1930 Mariano was living near the Flatlands followed by Park Slope in 1938. He declared bankruptcy in 1940 and died in 1942.

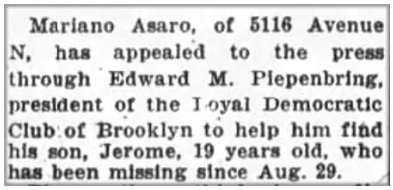
Shortly after Mariano Asaro's death, Mariano's son Michael, already an ex-con, was hit with a firearm violation and allegedly stashed two guns in a vehicle owned by his recently-deceased father. Cousin Joseph Asaro, a future Bonanno member and the son of Mariano's brother Vincenzo, was also linked to the case and Michael Asaro admitted that he and Joseph intended to "stick up a bookie" to pay for his father's funeral expenses. Michael later recanted the admission, claiming the guns belonged to his deceased father and said he had lied to protect his grieving mother but authorities suspected the Asaro cousins intended to rob a tavern in Bushwick where a collection of payroll funds were stored for workers at a nearby defense plant. Michael was expected to serve a mandatory sentence of 14 years for the offense. By the 1960s he was believed to be living in California, his mother having already moved to Los Angeles where she died in 1954.

EX-CON FACES
20 YEARS FOR
2 GUNS IN CAR

The two guns which were found in Michael Asaro's father's car, two days after the father was buried, will add up to a possible 20 years in Sing Sing for Michael when he is sentenced Wednesday as a second offender.

Son Michael stashed guns in the deceased Mariano's car.

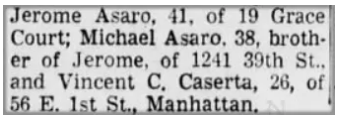
Mariano's eldest son Jerome, named for Girolamo, was also criminally active. A decade after Michael Asaro's firearm arrest, he and his brother Jerome were hit with a 1952 bootlegging charge along with a Martin Palmeri and future Genovese member Vincent "Jimmy Red" Caserta, among other Italians. Palmeri is likely Martino Palmeri, a suspected Brooklyn Bonanno member later killed in 1975. Twenty years later, in 1972, Jerome was arrested for using a stolen bank card and the FBI linked him to Bonanno captain Mickey Zaffarano, who was married to Jerome's first cousin and will be thoroughly examined later in the article. Jerome had previously disappeared for a time in 1929 while serving in the US Navy, the 19-year-old taking a furlough then failing to report back to the ship he was assigned to. His father Mariano urged authorities to find him and sought the assistance of the Loyal Democratic Club of Brooklyn.


Mariano Asaro, of 5116 Avenue N, has appealed to the press through Edward M. Piepenbring, president of the Loyal Democratic Club of Brooklyn to help him find his son, Jerome, 19 years old, who has been missing since Aug. 29.

Mariano sought his missing son Jerome in 1929.

The comments from Pietro Barone in Castellammare to Girolamo Asaro in 1908 indicate Mariano was involved in Cosa Nostra after arriving in New York even though there is little direct evidence that Mariano Asaro was a mafioso. The prolific mafia activities of Mariano's father, at least one brother, brother-in-law, and their descendants show that Mariano was surrounded by mafiosi, though, making the eldest son a probable member. Given his age and 1942 date of death we lack the contemporary sources needed to identify him as a member, unlike his brother Vincenzo who lived long enough for later sources to know of his Bonanno membership.

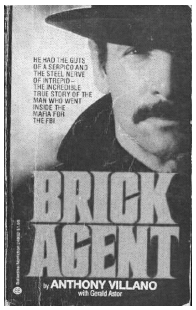
Mariano's sons Jerome and Michael are similarly never named as Bonanno members nor formal associates but their own criminal activity adds to the likelihood Mariano was a mafia figure. Michael was plotting at least one crime with his Bonanno-affiliated cousin Joseph Asaro and both of Mariano's sons can be linked to a Manhattan Genovese figure through the illegal alcohol trade, showing Mariano's branch was connected to the New York mafia even outside of the Bonanno Family. The additional involvement of Martin Palmeri in the bootlegging operation shows they had ties to other figures in the Bonanno orbit apart from their Asaro relatives alone.


Jerome Asaro, 41, of 19 Grace Court; Michael Asaro, 38, brother of Jerome, of 1241 39th St., and Vincent C. Caserta, 26, of 56 E. 1st St., Manhattan,

Mariano's sons engaged in bootlegging with Jimmy Caserta.

Former FBI agent Anthony Villano identified a Joseph Asaro in East New York as an old time Sicilian Bonanno member in his book *Brick Agent* which at a glance could indicate he's referring to Girolamo's second son Giuseppe. However, an examination of the full text clarifies he is referring to Giuseppe's brother Vincenzo and mistakenly called him Joseph. Villano describes "Joseph" Asaro as a captain in the Bonanno Family with a son named "Joseph Jr." who served around eight years on an armed robbery charge and became a federal fugitive after being paroled, ending up in Montreal where he was later detained by authorities. Vincenzo Asaro was a one-time Bonanno captain with a son named Joseph whose story is an exact match for "Joseph Jr."

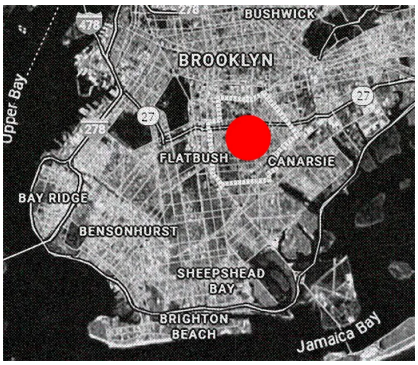
Making it even more obvious that Vincenzo is being described, Villano adds that "Joseph" Asaro Sr. had another son named Jerry with a criminal son of his own and that "Joseph's" son-in-law was Bonanno member Mickey Zaffarano. Again, these are facts about Vincenzo Asaro, not Giuseppe, so Villano's identification of an older "Joseph" Asaro tells us nothing about the true Giuseppe Asaro's status. That Special Agent Villano used the wrong given name for Vincenzo does not rule out Giuseppe Asaro's involvement in Cosa Nostra though no known sources have named him as a member and *Brick Agent* can be discounted as a source on Giuseppe Asaro.



The "Joseph Asaro" in *Brick Agent* was actually Vincenzo.

Born in 1890, the real Giuseppe Asaro may have arrived to New York by himself in 1905, arriving to his "uncle" Giacomo on Prince Street though this may be a cousin of the same name who was close in age as Giacomo was not Girolamo's brother but rather his first cousin; it's possible Giuseppe still regarded Giacomo Asaro as an "uncle", though. Giuseppe's father Girolamo and brother Mariano were in New York by 1904 and Giuseppe was at least in New York prior to his mother and siblings who joined them later in 1905. Giuseppe Asaro moved to Boston with his parents sometime after Girolamo's 1908 arrest. Though his parents were living in what is now Quincy, Giuseppe was living in downtown Boston near the West End in 1911 where he worked as a fruit dealer. His parents' death the following January prompted his return to New York, living by 1915 on the Lower East Side near today's East Village where he worked as a garment presser.

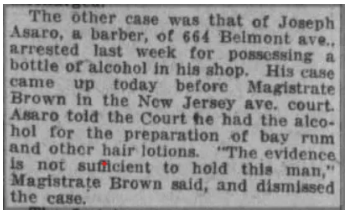
Giuseppe married Giovanna Rotolo in 1916. Her family was Castellammarese but her father's surname of Rotolo and her mother's maiden name Arena are not known in relevant mafia circles. Giuseppe remained in Lower Manhattan into the 1920s where he ran a tailor shop though by 1924 he was living in the Flatbush area close to younger brother Michele. Eldest brother Mariano Asaro and sister Brigida, the wife of Vito Bonventre, would live nearby as well for a time and Bonventre's nephew Joe Bonanno also spent a period living in this area during the 1930s.



Many of Girolamo's children spent time around East Flatbush.

In 1921, a barber named Joseph Asaro was arrested on an illegal alcohol charge at his shop on Belmont Avenue in Brooklyn very close to Pitkin Avenue, the same street Giuseppe's brother Vincenzo Asaro later lived on for decades. Available records for "our" Giuseppe Asaro consistently show him to work in the garment and clothing industry, including the 1920 and 1930 censuses on each side of the 1921 arrest and he wasn't known to be living in East New York at this time. His 1942 World War II draft card similarly places him in that field with no other records identifying him as a barber.

The Joseph Asaro arrested in 1921 was actually a different Giuseppe Asaro six years older than Girolamo's son who worked as a barber and came from Mazara del Vallo, Trapani. There were eventually two Mazarese Bonanno members in the East New York and Ozone Park area living near Vincenzo Asaro, Vito Bello and Vito "Willie" Dara, so this Joseph Asaro, although not a relative of Girolamo's Castellammarese clan, does add another Mazarese figure to the neighborhood who happened to be named Asaro. Though the barber's name, location, and alcohol-related arrest are interesting given his hometown of Mazara, the charge was hardly substantial: the barber was caught with a single bottle of alcohol and he claimed it was used in supplies for his shop.


The other case was that of Joseph Asaro, a barber, of 664 Belmont ave., arrested last week for possessing a bottle of alcohol in his shop. His case came up today before Magistrate Brown in the New Jersey ave. court. Asaro told the Court he had the alcohol for the preparation of bay rum and other hair lotions. "The evidence is not sufficient to hold this man," Magistrate Brown said, and dismissed the case.

The Asaro arrested in 1921 was a barber with a single bottle of alcohol.

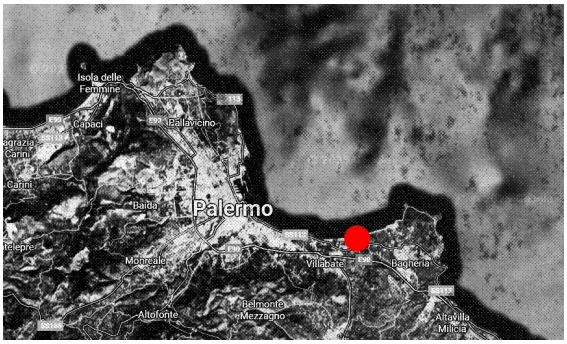
Girolamo Asaro's son Giuseppe was living on Nostrand Avenue in East Flatbush by 1942 and there is little information on him until his death in 1963. His passing occurred just before the Bonanno conflict erupted the following year and the FBI was still in the early stages of cultivating substantial member

sources, Giuseppe Asaro's name never surfacing in available reports. Many historic names were naturally overlooked or unknown to the FBI's sources but beyond his familial ties it can't be stated with any confidence that Giuseppe Asaro was a made member or significant associate. Like brothers Mariano and Vincenzo, he had a son named for his father Girolamo, this Jerome Asaro born in 1912 right between his namesake first cousins. Unlike his cousins, this Jerome is not known to have been criminally active.

Don Vincenzo Asaro

Vincenzo Asaro (b. 1892) was Girolamo's third son and the most well-known one, being the only son with confirmed Bonanno membership. After joining his father in New York in 1905, Vincenzo may have spent a period in Boston alongside his parents and brother Mariano, though he married Anna Macchiarella in Manhattan in November 1912, ten months after his parents died. Macchiarella's family was from Ficarazzi in Palermo, near Villabate and Bagheria.

Though tiny Ficarazzi itself shows up rarely in American Cosa Nostra, it did produce the Priolas of the Chicago and Rockford Families and sits in a region with rampant Sicilian mafia activity, Ficarazzi confirmed today to have its own *borgata* under the Bagheria *mandamento* (mafia administrative district). A Communist politician named Pietro Macchiarella was murdered by the mafia there in 1947 though little is known about historic Ficarazzese mafia clans and whether the Macchiarella name was also present within the local mafia. Vincenzo and Anna's son Jerry Asaro would associate early on with a senior bootlegger from nearby Santa Flavia who will be detailed later so there is more than one connection to this area of Palermo outside of Vincenzo's marriage alone.



Vincenzo's wife was from Ficarazzi (red), between Villabate & Bagheria.

Vincenzo's eldest son Jerome was born in Manhattan in 1913 and the Asaros were living in today's East Village by World War I. However, Vincenzo Asaro and his young family moved to his wife's hometown of Ficarazzi for a period

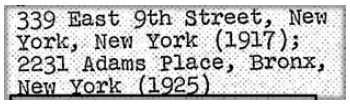
sometime between 1913 and 1917. A son, Giuseppe, was born there in 1915 but apparently died prematurely as this was not their mafioso son Joseph who was born in New York in 1919. Vincenzo, his wife Anna, and a young Jerome returned to New York from Sicily in 1917 and listed their last residence as Ficarazzi. Anna's family the Macchiarellas would eventually join the Asaros in New York.

Vincenzo worked in the garment industry in New York like brothers Mariano and Giuseppe, Asaro then serving in the US military for a period before being honorably discharged. He was living again in the East Village by 1920 where his naturalization was witnessed by a neighbor named Vincent Buffa, this likely being a Vincenzo Buffa who arrived to New York from Castellammare. Buffa's surname brings to mind the Antonino Buffa who cooperated against 1860s bandit Pasquale Turriciano as well as 1883 boss Francesco Plescia's baptismal godparents, another set of Castellammarese Buffas. Asaro's other naturalization witness was a Joseph Barbara, whose address is difficult to read but appears to reference Port Chester near the NY-Connecticut border.

The well-known Pittston / Endicott leader Joe Barbara was close to his *paesani* in the Bonanno Family but wasn't in the United States yet, though other Barbaras from Castellammare were already linked to mafia activity in different American locations, including New York City. Castellammarese mafiosi and Bonanno members did have a presence up the Hudson River as far as Marlboro, Newburgh, and Wappingers Falls, but Port Chester has not been linked to known Bonanno activity. The reference is curious on its own though as naturalization witnesses typically live in close proximity to the applicant or reflect an obvious relationship. Along with a Rondello, another witness at Vincenzo's parents' wedding in 1885 Castellammare was a Gaspare Barbara, showing the Asaros had enduring ties to Barbaras from Castellammare.

Vincenzo was living in the West Bronx by 1925, records for the premature death of his infant son Mario placing the family in a borough otherwise atypical for Castellammarese mafiosi. Historically associated with the Genovese, Lucchese, and Gambino Families, the Bonanno Family did eventually develop a Bronx faction that persists today but most of the Bronx Bonanno members were recruited into the Carmine Galante *decina* relatively late in the Family's history and many of these members were non-Castellammarese and non-Sicilian at that. Galante himself was not a Bronx resident and his crew included members from virtually all parts of New York City along with New Jersey and Canada. Nicolo Alfano headed an element of the Family with a presence in Westchester County earlier on but the known names in his mysterious group were primarily from Agrigento. Vincenzo

Asaro's presence in the Bronx is thus far unexplained but could connect to brother Mariano's one-time residence in Mount Vernon.

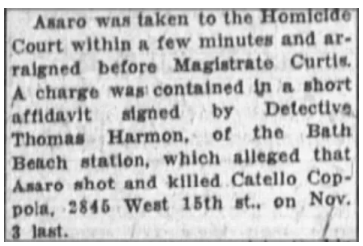

339 East 9th Street, New York, New York (1917); 2231 Adams Place, Bronx, New York (1925)

Vincenzo was briefly linked to a Bronx address in 1925.

One of brother Mariano's 1925 naturalization witnesses was a Vincenzo Asaro who gave his address as 12 Prince Street. This is directly next door to 10 Prince Street, the address Girolamo Asaro and his family were living at when he was arrested by Joe Petrosino in 1908 and across the street from 11 Prince Street where Girolamo lived the year previous. The Asaros apparently remained connected to this specific set of addresses even much later and if this is Mariano's brother Vincenzo, he was living in Little Italy in 1925 in addition to the brief time he spent in the Bronx. Vincenzo Asaro's year of induction into Cosa Nostra is unknown but likely occurred by the 1920s and his status as an underworld figure was publicly confirmed in 1931.

In early 1931 Vincenzo Asaro was charged in the November 1930 murder of a man named Catello Coppola who appears to have come from the Italian mainland. The murder investigation highlighted Asaro's prominent role in the illegal alcohol trade and it was suggested that Coppola's death was related to these affairs. Many non-Sicilians, especially Campanians and Calabrians, had been inducted into several of the New York Families by this time but the Bonanno and Colombo Families largely resisted the trend and there's no information suggesting Coppola was a particularly noteworthy mafia affiliate.

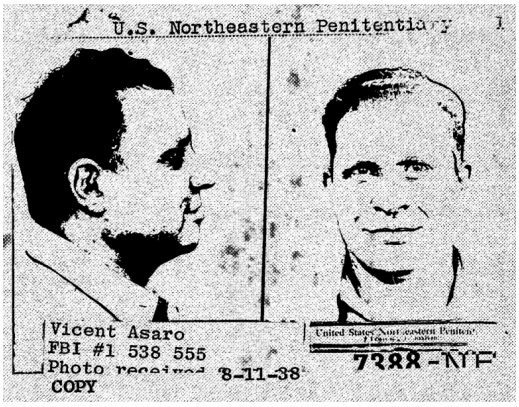
The Campanian Mike Coppola was a rising star in the Genovese Family's East Harlem faction under Joe Masseria at this time but the surname is common and the murder took place in Bath Beach, Brooklyn. However, the Castellammarese War was underway and contemporary law enforcement and media often assumed underworld murders were the result of "racket" disputes given their lack of insight into internal mafia politics so it can't be definitively stated that the shooting was entirely unrelated to other issues even though there is equally no basis to assume it was relevant to the war.


Asaro was taken to the Homicide Court within a few minutes and arraigned before Magistrate Curtis. A charge was contained in a short affidavit signed by Detective Thomas Harmon, of the Bath Beach station, which alleged that Asaro shot and killed Catello Coppola, 2845 West 15th st., on Nov. 3 last.

Asaro was accused of killing Catello Coppola.

Asaro was living in Dyker Heights near Bath Beach at the time of the 1930 Coppola murder but soon moved to what would become his long-time residence on Pitkin Avenue in East New York. Authorities identified Vincenzo Asaro as a leading bootlegger with operations stretching between Brooklyn and Long Island and suspected his involvement in “three or four” unspecified murders at the time of the Coppola murder, police alleging that Asaro himself was the triggerman who shot Catello Coppola. Charges were subsequently dropped but Asaro was also hit with a charge for illegal gun possession during this period.

A bootlegging conviction in 1938 resulted in a two year federal prison sentence which Asaro began serving at Lewisburg that August before being paroled in July of 1939. Asaro was running a bakery in Brooklyn prior to the bootlegging sentence. One of Vincenzo Asaro’s partners in the alcohol operation was Nicolo Pellegrino who had also been accused of stealing two dogs a short time earlier, paralleling the 1896 Castellammare case where a dog was stolen by the local mafia. Pellegrino was from Marsala on the southwestern Trapani coast and lived in the area of Pitkin Avenue in East New York like Asaro, dying in 1959.

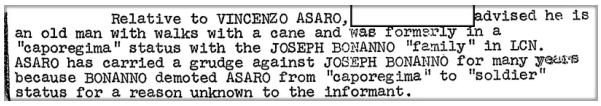


Asaro served time for bootlegging in the late 1930s.

Little is known of Vincenzo Asaro’s activities in the 1940s and ‘50s. FBI investigation into Vincenzo during the 1960s noted his association with boss Joe Bonanno, *capodecina* and future boss Gaspare DiGregorio, as well as DiGregorio’s future underboss Pietro Crociata, all Castellammarese Bonanno leaders. One 1960s source told the FBI that Asaro was once a *capodecina* but later demoted by Joe Bonanno, Asaro reportedly holding a “grudge” against Bonanno as a result. His sons and son-in-law Mickey Zaffarano were inducted into the Family by the late 1950s so his time as a captain could have coincided with that period. On a 1965 FBI recording, Stefano Magaddino described Vincenzo Asaro as a "big bull [in a China shop]," which appears to be a family quality as his namesake grandson Vinny could be described similarly and this

description of Vincenzo's temperament provides potential insight into his demotion.

The senior Asaro was seemingly removed from most Bonanno affairs by the 1960s but eventually sided with the DiGregorio faction against Bonanno when the notorious Family conflict broke out in late 1964. Bonanno was accused of a multitude of infractions: attempting a coup within the Los Angeles Family to expand his California influence, inducting members on the West Coast and in Canada without Commission approval, refusing to honor Commission protocol, and unfairly shelving his former friend Gaspare DiGregorio, who in turn petitioned his brother-in-law and cousin Stefano Magaddino for help. The Commission deposed Bonanno around Fall 1964 leading to a political cold war that provoked episodes of violence and "hot" warfare through 1968. Asaro is not mentioned as a major force in the conflict but one source mentioned Vincenzo carrying messages on behalf of DiGregorio and attending meetings related to the Family reorganization.


Relative to VINCENZO ASARO, [redacted] advised he is an old man with walks with a cane and was formerly in a "caporegima" status with the JOSEPH BONANNO "family" in LCN. ASARO has carried a grudge against JOSEPH BONANNO for many years because BONANNO demoted ASARO from "caporegima" to "soldier" status for a reason unknown to the informant.

Asaro turned against Bonanno following his demotion.

Vincenzo had an outburst during a 1966 FBI interview when agents asked him if he had ever been initiated into the mafia, Asaro growing "excited" and abruptly ending the interview. Special Agent Villano described a similar interaction with Asaro in *Brick Agent* that resulted in a bout of anger. Son Joseph was by this time a federal fugitive after jumping parole following his release from a robbery sentence and Vincenzo Asaro told Villano he believed his fugitive son Joseph to be deceased, asking the FBI's assistance in finding his body.

Despite claiming ignorance of Joseph Asaro's whereabouts, later in 1966 a sickly Vincenzo visited Joseph in Montreal, resulting in a police raid in which the father and son were detained alongside Montreal Bonanno leaders. Joseph was sent back to New York to serve the rest of his earlier armed robbery sentence while Vincenzo returned to his home in East New York though he visited his son-in-law Mickey Zaffarano in prison on several occasions in the late '60s. Asaro's friend Pietro Crociata, who became the underboss under DiGregorio prior to the latter stepping down in 1967, was shot and wounded in 1968 and Pietro's cousin Francesco Crociata similarly survived a shooting attempt a short time later as the Family shifted to Paul Sciacca's leadership and additional factional violence erupted. Referred to as "Don Vincenzo" by FBI sources in his later years, Asaro died naturally in 1970.

Vincenzo Asaro (pictured) visited son Joseph in Montreal.

The only remaining son of Girolamo Asaro after 1970 was Michele, the youngest. Born in 1895, Michele Asaro worked as a garment presser like all of his brothers. He was in Brooklyn early, living on Nostrand Avenue in East Flatbush by 1921 where brother Giuseppe became a nearby neighbor and witnessed Michele's naturalization in 1924. A Vincent Asaro living on the Lower East Side is also listed as a naturalization witness, other records confirming brother Vincenzo remained in Manhattan until at least 1925 and was himself naturalized years earlier.

Michele's wife Maria Fazio was Castellammarese and her mother was a Pizzo. A Giuseppe Pizzo from Castellammare, a relative of the Fiordilinos, joined the Family decades later and Maria Fazio's paternal grandmother was a Palmeri, the name of powerful Castellammarese brothers in the Buffalo Family under Stefano Magaddino as well as the surname of Mariano Asaro's sons' bootlegging associate Martin Palmeri and of course Brewster Bill Giallo's brother-in-law and alcohol partner Paul Palmeri. Joe Bonanno's great-uncle Stefano Magaddino's mother-in-law was another Fazio. Outside of his own blood relatives and possible connections through his wife's family, Michele Asaro is not otherwise linked with known mafia activity. He appears to have remained in East Flatbush and died in in 1984, making him the longest living Asaro brother.

Contemporary FBI informants in the 1960s were well-aware of Vincenzo's membership. Cooperating witnesses from the new millennium like Gasper Valenti and underboss Sal Vitale were similarly told of his membership, both men being close to Vincenzo's grandson Vinny Asaro, but both witnesses also became more heavily associated with the Bonanno Family in the 1970s only a short time after Vincenzo died which made his existence "fresh". Mariano was described by a Castellammarese mafioso in 1908 as his father's would-be "right arm" in America but his death in 1942 places him too far in the rearview mirror for later sources to be aware of his status. Giuseppe's place in the mafia subculture is even more vague and his 1963 death could go either way in

terms of membership probability. Michele though was alive when most of the major FBI informants and cooperating witnesses were active making him the brother least likely to have been a member.

ASARO—Michele. On Oct 20, 1984. Beloved husband of Mary S.(nee Fazio). Dear father of Rosalie Kastner & Mary. Also survived by 3 grandsons. Funeral Wed 9 A.M. from the McMANUS FUNERAL HOME, 2001 Flatbush Ave, Bklyn. Funeral Mass 9:45 A.M. St. Thomas Aquinas Church. Interment St. Charles' Cemetery.

Michele Asaro survived his brothers.

The presence of Girolamo Asaro's son Vincenzo in East New York near Ozone Park appears to be an outlier for the Castellammaresi in the Bonanno Family given the majority of them initially congregated in Williamsburg, Bushwick, and Ridgewood along with the historic Lower East Side. The Pitkin Avenue address Vincenzo Asaro lived at for decades was a short walk from “the Hole”, an unofficial sub-neighborhood of East New York that dips down into a sunken set of isolated streets prone to flooding. Various Asaro relatives had homes in “the Hole” itself and the area is infamous as a mafia graveyard used by John Gotti and the Gambino Bergin crew. The most well-known victims were three Bonanno captains murdered in 1981, the Bergin crew burying them in an empty lot in “the Hole” as a favor to the Bonanno leadership.

East New York & Ozone Park

The Bonanno Family did have other Trapanese members in the East New York and Ozone Park area. Vito Bello, referred to as "Antonio" by San Diego-based Los Angeles member informant Frank Bompensiero likely due to the nickname "Toni/Tony", derived from “Vitone”, was a native of Mazara del Vallo who eventually moved to San Diego but previously lived in Ozone Park. Fellow member Vito "Willie" Dara was an FBI informant with heritage in Trapani, specifically Mazara del Vallo and Marsala. Dara lived on the border between East Brooklyn and Ozone Park, at one point living just blocks from “the Hole” before moving to Florida full time. Dara claimed to be a “third cousin” of *capodecina* Mike Sabella, whose heritage was in Sciacca, Agrigento.

After arriving to New York in 1920, Vito Bello spent a number of years living in the areas of Williamsburg and Bushwick. Vito Bello’s confirmed links to the Bonanno Family go back to 1925 when he was arrested on forgery charges with Benny Gallo, the early Williamsburg power with heritage in Santa Ninfa and Salemi. The latter two towns sit inland from coastal Mazara in the southern part of Trapani province, suggesting Bello was initially associated with the Family’s larger element from this region. Researcher Joel Turner

discovered that he also spent time living in Newark where he was arrested on alcohol charges in 1927 and then again in 1942 with Mansueto "Tony" LiMandri from San Cipirello, a cousin of the well-known mafioso Marco LiMandri.

Bello was a Trapanese Bonanno member in Ozone Park.

Marco LiMandri was a nephew and son-in-law of early Morello leader Giovanni Pecoraro from Piana dei Greci and San Cipirello who was killed in the early 1920s war and LiMandri is believed to have been a member of an unspecified New York Family before moving to New Jersey and eventually San Diego where he joined the Los Angeles Family. His cousin Michael Pecoraro was a Gambino member who eventually lived in Los Angeles but retained affiliation with New York. LiMandri was closely connected to other Gambino members as well as Lucchese and Newark figures. He also visited New York during the 1960s Bonanno war and updated Los Angeles members on the conflict upon his return. Though generally assumed to have belonged to the Gambino Family like his cousin or perhaps the Luccheses based on his uncle / father-in-law's leadership in the old Morello Family and his son's intermarriage with former Lucchese associates the Dippolitos of the Los Angeles Family, the Bonannos can't be ruled out.

Future Bonanno *capodecina* Pietro Licata in Bushwick was from San Cipirello where he was identified by Italian authorities as a "mafia member" prior to arriving in the United States and an early New York mafia figure named Gioacchino DiMartino had ties to the early Bonanno Family and came from San Cipirello as well. DiMartino attended Vito Cascio Ferro's 1901 welcome banquet with Giuseppe Morello and early Bonanno leader Carlo Costantino, essentially confirming him as an important mafioso of the era. DiMartino listed Giovanni Pecoraro as a "cousin" on one arrival manifest which could have placed him with the Morello Family like Pecoraro but he spent time living in Williamsburg and arrived to Nicolo Schiro after one overseas trip, these details potentially placing him with the future Bonannos. Marco LiMandri's varied residences in Manhattan and New Jersey before his move to California don't place him in any obvious "territory" and based on his connections and associations he equally could have found affiliation with the Morello Family

and its offshoots the Genovese and Lucchese Families or the Gambinos, Bonannos, or even the Newark Family. His hometown of San Cipirello in provincial Palermo was also a nexus point between these groups.

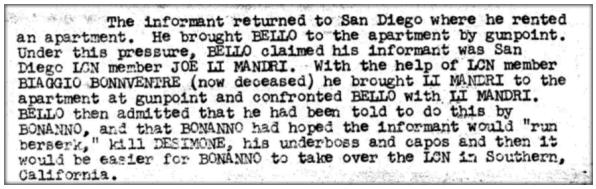
Following his New Jersey arrest in 1942, Vito Bello moved to Ozone Park where he remained into the '50s before settling in San Diego like LiMandri though Bello retained his membership with the Bonanno Family. Bello presumably knew his Ozone Park neighbors the Asaros though evidence of a relationship has not been found. Frank Bompensiero knew of him as a Bonanno member and restaurant owner in San Diego, recalling that Bello played a significant role in Joe Bonanno's attempt to usurp control of the Los Angeles Family from boss Frank DeSimone. Frank Bompensiero's own heritage was in Porticello, a *frazione* of Santa Flavia, and he spent part of his youth growing up in Sicily although he was born in Milwaukee.

Bompensiero (pictured) confirmed Bello's membership.

In the early 1960s, Bompensiero told the FBI that Joe Bonanno held meetings with Los Angeles members Bompensiero, Jimmy Fratianno, and Biaggio Bonventre, the former Michigan mafioso from Monte San Giuliano, as Bonanno intensified his efforts to control California. Eventually, Vito Bello contacted these Los Angeles members and informed them that DeSimone intended to kill Bompensiero with a car bomb. After stalking the Los Angeles leadership, the group kidnapped *capodecina* Angelo Polizzi, who originally came from Buffalo and had heritage in San Giuseppe Jato, which adjoins the LiMandris' hometown of San Cipirello, then forced him to meet with Bello.

Polizzi denied the accusation about a plot to kill Frank Bompensiero and Bello ultimately admitted that the threat against Bompensiero was invented by Joe Bonanno so that Bompensiero and his friends would kill the DeSimone administration and make it easier for Bonanno to exert influence in Los Angeles. Frank Bompensiero told the FBI that Vito Bello subsequently returned to New York City and died in the mid-1960s. The episode was also reported to the Commission who criticized the kidnapping of Angelo Polizzi but expressed their sympathies given Bonanno's ruse.

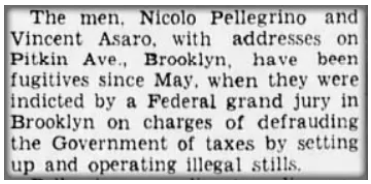
Interestingly, in another telling of the same story, Bompensiero stated that Bello told him it was none other than Marco LiMandri's son Joseph, a Los Angeles member, who originally informed Bello about the leadership's plot to kill Bompensiero and that LiMandri was kidnapped and interrogated about the manufactured plot before Vito Bello came clean. Given Bello associated with LiMandri's father's cousin in New Jersey many years previous it is no coincidence he had a relationship to Joseph LiMandri in San Diego. Whether Bello dragged LiMandri into the scheme unknowingly is another question, the possibility also existing that the LiMandris were part of the plot in the beginning and Joseph backed off when push came to shove. Either way, Bompensiero believed this affair contributed to Bonanno's downfall and indeed one of the common reasons given for Bonanno's removal as boss involved his intention to take over Los Angeles.


The informant returned to San Diego where he rented an apartment. He brought BELLO to the apartment by gunpoint. Under this pressure, BELLO claimed his informant was San Diego LCN member JOE LI MANDRI. With the help of LCN member BIAGGIO BONNVENTRE (now deceased) he brought LI MANDRI to the apartment at gunpoint and confronted BELLO with LI MANDRI. BELLO then admitted that he had been told to do this by BONANNO, and that BONANNO had hoped the informant would "run berserk," kill DESIMONE, his underboss and capos and then it would be easier for BONANNO to take over the LCN in Southern, California.

In one telling, Bello dragged Joe LiMandri into Bonanno's Los Angeles plot.

The presence of the Asaros in East New York and Ozone Park alongside Mazaresi is interesting as Uncle Stefano Magaddino made reference to an apparent member named "Gregorio" connected to Mazara in his 1908 letter to Girolamo Asaro and the Asaro surname is more common in Mazara del Vallo than it is Castellammare del Golfo. The various Asaros in Castellammare, including this clan, appear to trace their ancestry to Mazara though their migration to the north of Trapani took place in the 17th century based on available documentation.

The 1921 barber arrested for possessing illegal alcohol was a Joseph Asaro from Mazara and he even lived in Vincenzo Asaro's future neighborhood, as mentioned. Mazara is also just down the Trapani coast from Marsala, where Vincenzo Asaro's 1930s bootlegging associate Nicolo Pellegrino came from. Pellegrino lived very close to Asaro and "the Hole", adding Pellegrino to this Trapanese Brooklyn-Queens mafia environment. Willie Dara's background in both Mazara and Marsala complements both Vito Bello and Nicolo Pellegrino's presence in the area. Pellegrino's formal status is unknown and he was presumably affiliated with the Bonanno Family like Asaro though the Bonannos were not the only Family who recruited Trapanese members in this area.

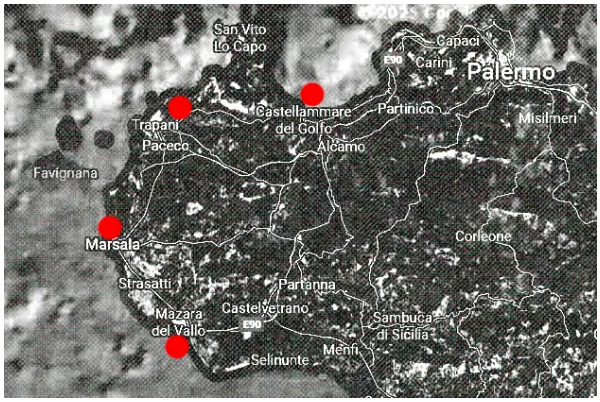

The men, Nicolo Pellegrino and Vincent Asaro, with addresses on Pitkin Ave., Brooklyn, have been fugitives since May, when they were indicted by a Federal grand jury in Brooklyn on charges of defrauding the Government of taxes by setting up and operating illegal stills.

Asaro's bootlegging partner Pellegrino came from Marsala.

Outside of the Bonannos, the nearby "Canarsie" *decina* of the Lucchese Family was led by Paul Vario in the 1960s who had heritage in Monte San Giuliano and his brother Leonard once lived in "the Hole" next door to Asaro relatives. The Vario brothers' sponsor into the mafia was Joseph Schiavo from Castellammare del Golfo, who became affiliated with the Luccheses rather than the Bonannos for reasons unknown. Schiavo was described by his marital relative Al D'Arco, the future captain of the crew, as close to boss Gaetano Lucchese, a native of Palermo, but he otherwise can't be connected to the dominant Castellammarese clans, local relationships perhaps positioning him as a Lucchese recruit rather than Bonanno.

The Lucchese crew's early *capodecina* Salvatore Curiale and other members the Saccos were from Joppolo Giancaxio in Agrigento. Paul Vario's protege Domenico Cutaia also had heritage in Mazara del Vallo like Bello and Dara of the Bonannos along with Porto Empedocle, Agrigento, his family background complementing the heritage of earlier members. The history of this Lucchese *decina* is even more mysterious than the presence of Trapanese Bonanno members in the Brooklyn-Queens area given the formative Lucchese Family was primarly based in East Harlem, the Bronx, and Little Italy and made up of Corleonesi and other mafiosi from the eastern Palermo interior.

Trapani and Agrigento had virtually no presence in the Lucchese Family elsewhere except in New Jersey, where the Family absorbed a faction of Vitesi and other mafiosi from Trapani when the Newark Family disbanded in the 1930s. Al D'Arco commented that Curiale had once been with "the Brooklyn Family" prior to the Luccheses which suggests he transferred, this being a possible reference to the Gambinos who had the city's largest Agrigentino element although this was based in Lower Manhattan and an entirely different part of Brooklyn so it's possible too that Curiale was a former Bonanno if indeed he transferred; there is no "Brooklyn Family" known to have existed apart from the Five Families' various Brooklyn crews.

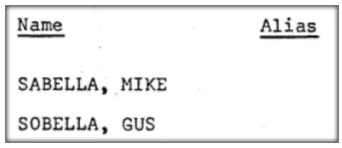


Trapani produced Bonanno & Lucchese members in eastern Brooklyn.

Much as the Asaros would come to associate closely with Paul Vario, Bonanno member Willie Dara was also particularly close to Vario. A tile setter by trade, Dara began cooperating with the FBI while living in Miami during the Bonanno war and told agents he had been initiated into the Bonanno Family around 1949 or 1950, being sponsored by his distant cousin Mike Sabella and another individual identified only as "Mariano". Though Dara grew up near the Asaros, Mariano Asaro can be ruled out as he was deceased by then and Dara additionally stated that "Mariano" was around the same age as Dara, who was born in 1905. Sabella was from Little Italy and other sources confirm he originally became *capodecina* at a relatively young age when Giovanni Bonventre was demoted in the 1940s though Bonventre was later reinstated. He is most well-known for his time as a captain in the late 1970s when he supervised soldier Lefty Ruggiero and his associate "Donnie Brasco", who was in fact FBI agent Joe Pistone; Sabella was demoted following Carmine Galante's 1979 murder.

A 1963 FBI list of Bonanno members includes a "Gus Sobella" [sic] as a member and a 1958 FBI informant stated "Gus Sobella" was an elder Cosa Nostra member from the Lower East Side who associated with Salvatore "Charlie Lucky" Luciano decades earlier. Mike's father was named Accursio "Gus" Sabella though it's not evident why this "Gus Sobella" was named specifically as a Bonanno member as the 1958 source did not mention the Bonannos nor is it stated this is Mike's father. The given name Accursio and surname Sabella are common in Sciacca and many Accursios used the diminutive "Gus". The Sabellas had no known relation to the prominent Castellammarese Sabellas, including Philadelphia boss Salvatore Sabella, his brother Domenico "Mimi" Sabella who had a mid-1920s dispute with Joe Bonanno, or their cousin Domenico "Little Mimi" Sabella who was another Bonanno member alongside the other "Mimi" but something funneled Mike Sabella into the Bonannos and he in turn recruited Willie Dara from Ozone Park. We can be certain that the name "Gus Sobella" referred to someone in Little Italy named Accursio "Gus"

Sabella, the question simply remains whether this was actually Mike's father Gus and whether he truly was a Bonanno member.



Name	Alias
SABELLA, MIKE	
SOBELLA, GUS	

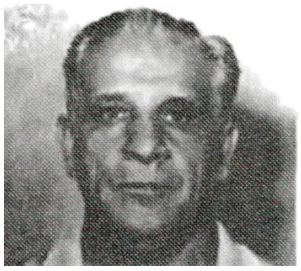
The name "Gus Sobella" is consistent with Mike Sabella's father.

The 1963 list contains a number of identification errors, some known members of other Families included as Bonannos, but it may suggest Gus Sabella was an earlier Bonanno member, there being many other Agrigentino Bonanno members referenced throughout this article. Dara's professed relation to the Sabellas and his confirmed close association with Mike Sabella, could point to other factors that led Mike Sabella into the Bonanno Family. If they were relatives of Willie Dara from the Ozone Park area, the Sabellas had relatives from Marsala and / or Mazara del Vallo which plays directly into the Trapanese network and therefore Bonanno recruitment. Another factor is Mike Sabella's upbringing in Little Italy, where members of all five Families mingled closely, this element once being generalized by the FBN as the "Mulberry Mob" prior to the 1960s. Sabella's *compaesani* Alphonse "Sonny Red" Indelicato, his brother Joseph, and son Anthony, aka "Bruno", also came up in Little Italy and joined the Bonannos despite having relatives in the Gambino Family; the majority of Sciacchitani in New York were Gambino members.

Willie Dara updated the FBI on the Bonanno war during the mid-late 1960s from the perspective of a Florida-based Bonanno member but also regularly referenced Paul Vario, who he met with when the latter visited Miami. During the war, both Dara and Mike Sabella were placed under the protection of Paul Vario, a common practice during Cosa Nostra conflicts. For comparison, members of the Gallo faction were placed under the Gambino Family for a time during the Colombo Family dispute years earlier. While these members do report to the other Family under this arrangement it is different from a formal transfer as the members don't permanently stay with the Family in question. While Dara was hardly in a position to need protection on his own, other sources identified Mike Sabella as having served as one of the Family's acting bosses after Joe Bonanno's demotion and prior to Gaspare DiGregorio's election, placing him at the center of the Family's dangerous political game in the mid-1960s.

Despite being a longtime Bonanno member, Willie Dara's information was prone to error and his understanding of mafia formalities was sometimes vague and misleading, many of the rumors Dara heard about the Bonanno war

also questionable. He operated on the periphery of the Bonanno Family and most of his interactions were with members of other Families who resided alongside him in Florida. He did provide valuable intelligence and his close relationship to Paul Vario at least confirms that the connections he formed around East New York and Ozone Park remained relevant even after moving to Miami. He did not provide any substantial information about the Asaros in available reports but undoubtedly knew them given he grew up in close proximity to Vincenzo Asaro and his sons.



Dara (pictured) stayed close to Paul Vario.

The Gambino faction on the eastern edge of Brooklyn and neighboring Ozone Park contrasts with the Bonanno and Lucchese groups in terms of heritage. Captain Carmine Fatico had heritage in Molise and both John Gotti and Anthony "Andy" Ruggiano Sr. were Neapolitan, associate Anthony Ruggiano Jr. stating in interviews that the Gottis and Ruggianos shared a bond over a common ancestral hometown. Andy Ruggiano's paternal side was from Sant'Agata de Goti and his maternal side was from Salerno while John Gotti's grandparents were reportedly from Casalnuovo di Napoli so it's unclear if Ruggiano Jr.'s belief is accurate or perhaps derives from the "Goti" part of his grandfather's hometown. The Corrozzos who branched off from this crew and formed their own formidable faction in the area are Sicilian but Messinese and thus not part of the same traditional mafia networks that produced nearby Bonanno and Lucchese members. There were also Genovese and Colombo members active in these neighborhoods but like the Gambinos they appear to be aloof from the western Sicilian roots of the mafia phenomenon.

The presence of Trapanese members in the Bonanno and Lucchese Families demonstrates that a small mafia-affiliated colony from this Sicilian region did exist near the Brooklyn-Queens border and Vincenzo Asaro was a particularly notable part of this pattern. How the Lucchese crew came to be is an unanswerable question but despite operating outside of the Bonanno Family's typical neighborhoods, the Asaros were nonetheless with other Bonanno members from the same province and the Family as a whole was mostly Trapanese. As an established Castellammarese clan, the Asaros' affiliation with

the Bonannos is no mystery and it's unsurprising they maintained Bonanno affiliation regardless of where they lived.

Girolamo Asaro's Sons-in-Law

Girolamo Asaro's son-in-law Vito Bonventre (b. 1891) operated quietly as a Bonanno member alongside his brothers Pietro (b. 1887) and Giovanni (b. 1901), the latter a *capodecina* who played a pivotal role under Joe Bonanno's leadership. The Bonventre brothers' mother was a Magaddino, the Stefano Magaddino from the 1908 Asaro letter being the Bonventres' uncle along with Giovanni and Giuseppe Magaddino, whose powerful mafioso sons are mentioned throughout this article. The Bonventres' sister Caterina married Salvatore Bonanno in 1904, making Joe Bonanno their nephew. The Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan was one of the preeminent mafia groups in Castellammare, Joe Bonanno describing them as such and a wealth of other evidence supporting his view.

Frank Fiordilino was well-aware of the Bonventres' reputation in Cosa Nostra. Though too young to have personal experience with older members of the clan, he knew the Bonventre family to be refined and politically savvy mafiosi who preferred to use the "pen" in contrast with the more rugged "mountain people" like the Buccellatos and Frank's own Fiordilino clan. The Bonventres in his view represented the "town" of Castellammare opposed to the rural hills on the outskirts of the municipality. Salvatore Bonanno's marriage to Caterina Bonventre described Bonanno as a *possidente*, like his brother Peppe's own marital record, but Caterina's father Martino Bonventre was listed as a *borgese*. Fittingly, a literal translation of *borgese* is "of the town" and indicated middle-class, the Bonventres not as affluent as the Bonannos but still of respectable social standing.

The Bonventres represented the "town" of Castellammare.

Older generations of Bonventres are largely a mystery and they were not named in the 1883 and 1896 investigations. Vito's grandfather Giuseppe

Bonventre was the brother of the elder Vito Bonvente's (b. 1875) grandfather Vito, the prominence of both of these Bonventre branches in the early 20th century suggesting older generations of Bonventres were part of the developing Castellammarese mafia much earlier. The Bonventre brothers' father Martino is mentioned by Joe Bonanno but only as a highly religious man who served as an unofficial doctor in Castellammare capable of healing wounds and fixing broken bones despite lacking a proper medical background. His namesake grandson Dr. Martino Bonventre became a literal physician and head of a Brooklyn hospital but a photo in *The Last Testament of Bill Bonanno* also indicates Dr. Bonventre was a Bonanno member, Martino seated at a table exclusively made up of Bonanno members along with Salvatore Profaci Sr., a Colombo member and Bonanno in-law. The caption describes the men in the photo as Bonanno members and lists Martino Bonventre by name but does not disclude him from membership.

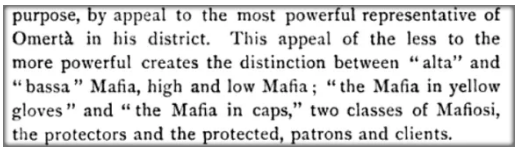
Dr. Martino Bonventre was the son of Pietro, making him Vito's nephew, and he was not the only doctor in the Bonanno Family. The Bonannos also inducted Dr. Mario Tagliagambe, whose paternal heritage came from a mix of Sicilian towns though his maternal side was Castellammarese. His uncle Silvio Tagliagambe was a suspected Bonanno member close to Paolo Palmeri in early New York City before the latter moved to Buffalo but Silvio was killed during an attempted hit on Joe Masseria in 1922. The induction of doctors into the Bonanno Family reflects the traditional Sicilian mafia's broad range of recruitment and also the *alta mafia* reputation of the Bonventres. Many doctors have been identified as Cosa Nostra members in Sicily, past and present, including sitting bosses. Unsurprisingly, Dr. Bonventre was close to Joe Bonanno's brother-in-law Giuseppe Spadaro, an *alta* mafioso and respected businessman.

Tagliagambe (L) & Martino Bonventre (R) were mafia doctors.

Frank Fiordilino identified two subsets of the Castellammarese mafia and though he didn't use the terms "*alta*" (high) and "*bassa*" (low), his description of the "town" mafiosi like the Bonventres and the "mountain" mafiosi like the Buccellatos is a near-identical distinction between the upper and lower classes of the mafia. Commentary from well-known American defectors illustrates the same dynamic, Sammy Gravano's "gangsters" vs. "racketeers" or

Phil Leonetti's "shooters" vs. "businessmen" distinctions making a similar point. San Giuseppe Jato *pentito* Giovanni Brusca emphasized this aspect of the Sicilian mafia during the 1980s and '90s, too, describing the constant tension between the "peasants" in the Palermo interior and the "aristocrats" in Palermo *citta*.

These class distinctions are a point of pride within the mafia regardless of which side a given member comes from. Joe Bonanno was from the "aristocratic" Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan and the central theme he rests on throughout *A Man of Honor* is essentially "I'm a superior class of mafioso." Brusca's account in Sicily showed that the "peasants" in Corleone and San Giuseppe Jato were equally proud to be unrefined and raw, their reputation based on ruthlessness and sheer force of will rather than Palermitano politicking. Gravano and Leonetti were similarly proud to be "gangsters" or "shooters", Gravano in particular devaluing members like Carlo Gambino's son Tommy for doing unmanly work in the garment trade, Tommy Gambino a garment executive who met with Gravano on one occasion while pinning together a woman's dress design. As early as 1898, William Agnew Patton observed this interplay between the *alta* and *bassa* elements in his book "Picturesque Sicily".

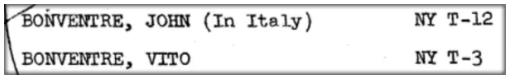

purpose, by appeal to the most powerful representative of Omertà in his district. This appeal of the less to the more powerful creates the distinction between "alta" and "bassa" Mafia, high and low Mafia; "the Mafia in yellow gloves" and "the Mafia in caps," two classes of Mafiosi, the protectors and the protected, patrons and clients.

Class distinctions within the mafia date back to the 1800s.

This dynamic was clearly at play in Castellammare between the men of the "town" and the men of the "mountain". The Bonventres' war with the Buccellatos could be framed in these terms: the polished townsmen against the hill people. These upper class vs. lower class dynamics in the mafia have always been a factor regardless of location or vernacular and the members are acutely aware of it. These tensions spill over into violence on occasion but it generally persists as a passive rivalry given these classes coexist within the same Family. The 1862 revolt in Castellammare provides no concrete evidence of direct mafia involvement in the total affair but both sides of the conflict, the nobility and the mob of angry peasants, some of them allegedly bandits, show possible mafia ties. If the mafia was involved, allegiance may have been divided within the mafia's own classes much as it was divided in the town's broader population.

It's difficult to gauge the Asaros' perceived class by the 20th century but they had a history in the town's *alta* environment yet were also regarded as

"mountain people" by Frank Fiordilino, Girolamo Asaro's close association with the Buccellatos reflecting this. Girolamo's daughter did marry Vito Bonventre but his descendants took a different path from the Bonventres in New York. Both clans continued to operate within Cosa Nostra but the Asaro descendants remained resolutely blue collar and melted in with the rampant "gangsterism" that colored the wider New York mafia while Dr. Martino Bonventre, the only known Bonventre son believed to have joined the Family, became a doctor and hospital director. Vito Bonventre wasn't a doctor like his nephew but his criminal status was less apparent than some of his peers and he gave no appearances of "gangsterism" despite his mafia membership.

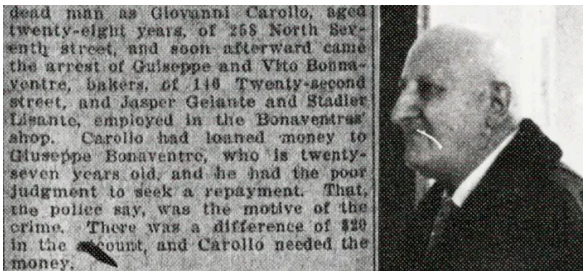

BONVENTRE, JOHN (In Italy) NY T-12
BONVENTRE, VITO NY T-3

Bonventre was a confirmed member of the Bonanno Family.

Arriving to New York in 1906, Vito Bonventre lived in Williamsburg and was joined by brother Pietro in 1908 who arrived with sister Caterina Bonanno and her young son Joe, the group following the recently-arrived Salvatore Bonanno. Vito and Pietro operated a Brooklyn bakery and Vito later entered the garment industry as a presser like many Bonanno members, including the Asaros. Joe Bonanno said relatively little about Vito and Pietro's activities beyond them providing assistance when he initially settled in Williamsburg in the mid-1920s but FBI sources explicitly named both Vito and Pietro Bonventre as Bonanno members.

Another Bonventre brother was Giuseppe, briefly mentioned earlier because his mother-in-law was an Ingoglia. Giuseppe Bonventre arrived to New York in 1906 like Vito and lived alongside his brothers in Brooklyn. Their younger brother Giovanni, still a child when his brothers left Castellammare, didn't arrive to the United States until much later.

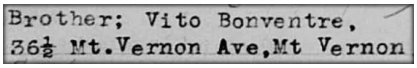
The most notable episode of Vito Bonventre's underworld career occurred in 1908 when Vito, Giuseppe, and Giuseppe's brother-in-law Gaspare Galante were implicated in the murder of *compaesano* Giovanni Carollo, a name shared with a current Bonanno member from Castellammare. The dispute supposedly related to a loan Giuseppe Bonventre owed to Carollo and when Carollo asked to be repaid he was killed by Giuseppe and Vito Bonventre along with Galante and an employee of the Bonventre bakery referred to as "Stadler Lisante" [sic]. Carollo was strangled to death, placed in an empty flour sack, and thrown in an empty lot in Borough Park, Brooklyn.


dead man as Giovanni Carollo, aged twenty-eight years, of 258 North Seventh street, and soon afterward came the arrest of Guiseppe and Vito Bonnaventre, bakers, of 146 Twenty-second street, and Jasper Gelante and Stadler Lisante, employed in the Bonaventres' shop. Carollo had loaned money to Giuseppe Bonaventre, who is twenty-seven years old, and he had the poor judgment to seek a repayment. That, the police say, was the motive of the crime. There was a difference of $20 in the account, and Carollo needed the money.

Vito Bonventre was linked to a 1908 murder.

The Bonventres were able to escape charges but this murder may have been referenced later during the early 1920s "Good Killers" investigation. Cooperator Bartolo Fontana referred to a baker named Vito Bonventre in connection with a murder around fifteen years previous but his recollections were at times confusing. Some of the details matched the Carollo murder but others were conflicting, like Fontana believing a much older Vito Bonventre was the victim of the murder rather than one of the perpetrators. There is no known murder victim named Vito Bonventre from that period and "our" Vito Bonventre can be independently verified as a suspect in the 1908 Carollo murder so Fontana may have confused one of the participants for a victim.

Giuseppe Bonventre returned to Sicily sometime after the 1908 arrest but left for America again in 1910, heading to his brother Vito in Williamsburg. Italian vital records however place Giuseppe in Castellammare in 1911, 1914, 1917, and finally 1918 when his 33-year-old wife Francesca Galante died. Bonventre remarried a woman with the Navarra surname in Castellammare the following year then in 1921 traveled from Argentina to New York, listing a friend "Gervasi Gervasio" as his departure contact. He was heading to his brother Vito Bonventre who by this time was in Mount Vernon with wife Brigida Asaro, linking the families of Mariano Asaro and now Vito Bonventre to this part of Westchester County.


Brother; Vito Bonventre,
36½ Mt.Vernon Ave,Mt Vernon

Vito Bonventre once lived in Mt. Vernon like Mariano Asaro.

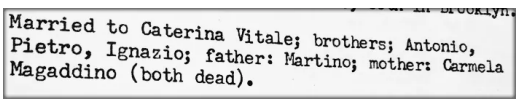
The eldest Bonventre brother may have remained in the United States from that point forward but he was living in California by 1925. Giuseppe Bonventre inexplicably died in Tijuana that April, was buried in San Diego, and in June the *San Bernardino Daily Sun* published his name on a list of delinquent tax payers. A legal notice about his estate mentioned properties in the area of San Bernardino and Chino.

Los Angeles was in Nicolo Schiro's orbit at the time, the Bonanno boss of the 1910s and '20s having a close relationship to Rosario DeSimone who came

from Salaparuta, Trapani, and spent time as a Pueblo member before transferring to Los Angeles and becoming a top leader. Schiro specifically witnessed the wedding of DeSimone's niece to a son of San Francisco boss Francesco Lanza, a native of Castelbuono, Palermo, who was originally affiliated with the early Bonanno Family in New York. San Diego had a strong presence from Alcamo and other Trapani towns, the Bonanno Family having remote members and enduring ties there in later years as did Detroit figures from Trapani province and Partinico. Giuseppe Bonventre was presumably a Bonanno member like his three brothers but he went back and forth between New York and Sicily frequently, Castellammare seeming to be his primary residence through most of the 1910s.

It's possible too he was a Los Angeles member at his time of death but unlike brothers Pietro, Vito, and Giovanni his mafia membership remains unconfirmed and Joe Bonanno makes no reference to him in his memoir, nor do San Diego sources like Frank Bompensiero who first became active in the 1920s. San Diego-based Los Angeles member Biaggio Bonventre moved to California in the 1930s after associating with the violent Trapanese mafia faction in Flint and Detroit but Biaggio may be the only known Bonventre in the American mafia who was not related to the Bonventres of the Bonanno and Castellammare Families, Biaggio Bonventre's family hailing instead from Monte San Giuliano and San Vito lo Capo. His mother was born in Alcamo but a direct connection to Castellammare cannot be substantiated. Though it is a coincidence that Giuseppe Bonventre and Biaggio Bonventre shared the same surname and both had a presence in Southern California, it is not coincidental that Trapanese mafiosi flocked to the area as this was an established node in the Trapani network.

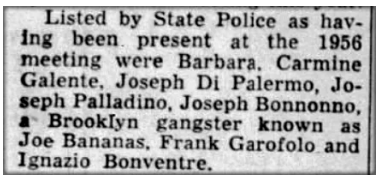
The FBN's profile of Giovanni Bonventre identified two other brothers as Antonio and Ignazio but overlooked Vito. The FBI's "Dead List" similarly includes an Antonio Bonventre, brother of Giovanni, who died in 1966 at 63-years-old. The "Dead List" is an FBI-created database of "persons of interest" now known to be deceased and isn't limited to mafia affiliates but many of them are included and given the designation "LCN". It is a valuable resource though sometimes there are errors or it's otherwise unclear why a certain name was included.


Married to Caterina Vitale; brothers; Antonio,
Pietro, Ignazio; father: Martino; mother: Carmela
Magaddino (both dead).

The FBN believed the Bonventres had brothers named Antonio & Ignazio.

An SSDI record shows an Antonino Bonventre born in 1903 who died in Queens in 1983, though I wasn't able to find a match for one who died in 1966. An Antonio Bonventre (b. 1877) from Williamsburg was arrested in Springfield, MA, in 1920 for swindling grocery stores and was accused of previous swindles in Schenectady, NY. One of Bonventre's accomplicates was Vito Pellicane (b. 1880) from Santa Ninfa, a resident of Williamsburg, and another participant was a local Springfield contact named "Antonio Dorssi" [sic] aka "Vito Solli". This Antonino Bonventre however was born in Alcamo. The Bonventre brothers' extended cousin Vito Bonventre (b. 1875) also had a brother named Antonino who lived in New York. There were others too, including an Antonio Bonventre in New York murdered in 1930 but his connection to the other Bonventres is unknown although a brother named Joseph was confirmed by LCNBios to have associated with Bonanno figures.

The Ignazio Bonventre referenced in the FBN file for Giovanni Bonventre is even more tenuous, the only candidate in the United States being one born in 1889 who lived in Bushwick. He was from Alcamo, though, and his parentage also rules him out from being one of "the" Bonventre brothers. Giovanni Bonventre was misidentified as "Ignazio" Bonventre in some newspaper coverage of the Apalachin affair so that may have contributed to confusion over the existence of a brother with that name. An Antonino/Antonio may or may not have been an actual Bonventre brother but his direct involvement in Cosa Nostra has yet to be substantiated, as is further identifying information confirming his birth and death. If the FBI's "Dead List" were accurate, it would make this brother the youngest known Bonventre brother and the closest Bonventre in age to Joe Bonanno yet he makes no mention of an uncle named "Antonio" or any of its variations.


Listed by State Police as having been present at the 1956 meeting were Barbara, Carmine Galente, Joseph Di Palermo, Joseph Palladino, Joseph Bonnonno, a Brooklyn gangster known as Joe Bananas, Frank Garofolo and Ignazio Bonventre.

Giovanni Bonventre was misidentified in the press as "Ignazio".

After leaving Williamsburg, Vito Bonventre lived near the Asaros in East Flatbush between the 1920s and early 30s. His nephew Joe Bonanno also spent time living in the East Flatbush area during this timeframe. Bonventre's 1924 naturalization was witnessed by his brother Pietro Bonventre and brother-in-law Giuseppe Asaro. Pietro spent time working as a barber but went into the undertaking business with brother-in-law Vittorio Anello under the name Anello-Bonventre, providing services to many Bonanno figures and their

relatives. There was yet another Antonio Bonventre who passed away in 1954 and was waked at the Anello-Bonventre funeral home.

Bonventre, his wife, and daughter Carmela were living in Bushwick by the 1940s. Brigida Asaro however died young in 1946. She was only forty-eight when she passed. The couple spent many years following the other Asaros to various parts of the city but Vito Bonventre appears to have stayed aloof from his in-laws after his wife's passing, at least geographically. It's unknown if Bonventre remained personally close to the Asaros following Brigida's death.

Vito's brother Giovanni Bonventre joined his brothers in America considerably later, arriving in 1933 and spending time in the Endicott Castellammarese community before settling in New York City. He was a *capodecina* by the mid-1940s though Bill Bonanno said in his final book that Giovanni was demoted for a time and his crew was given to a young Mike Sabella; Bonventre was supposedy punished for insulting Stefano Magaddino. Magaddino himself recalled an incident with his cousin "Giovannino" on a 1960s FBI tape where Bonventre disparaged his cousin but Magaddino felt Joe Bonanno had forced him to choose between Bonventre and Gaspare DiGregorio, the original nature of the dispute left vague.

Giovanni became the most prominent Bonventre brother in NYC.

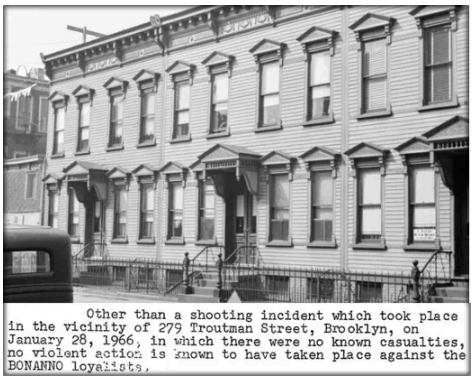
Giovanni Bonventre's 1940 naturalization was witnessed by his brother Pietro Bonventre and Bonanno member Antonio "Nino" Adamo from Santa Margherita di Belice, Agrigento. Giovanni Bonventre was living in Bushwick and in the garment business at the time but like brother Pietro he once ran his own funeral parlor with Joe Bonanno's brother-in-law Frank LaBruzzo, a fellow Bonanno member and later a *capodecina* as well as the Family's acting boss just prior to Bonanno's fall from power. Giovanni regained his captain title by the 1950s and his stature is evident by his attendance at the 1956 Binghamton Commission meeting and the 1957 Apalachin conference. Bonventre was by then spending time back in Castellammare and reportedly attended meetings with high-level Sicilian mafiosi.

Vito Bonventre was presumably a soldier under Giovanni but the latter moved permanently to Sicily by 1958. Giovanni experienced ongoing legal trouble

from Italian authorities and appears to have served as a respected elder among the Sicilians, Bonventre aided by his marriage to the sister of Castellammarese mafia leader Vito Vitale. Vitale's mother was a Ciaravino like the Magaddinos and Vitale's son Michelangelo spent time in Detroit and Brooklyn during the 1940s and '50s but disappeared under mysterious circumstances, his FBN profile stating he was married to a Domingo and his mother, Vito's wife, was a Bologna, a surname that intersects with 1896 Castellammare boss Giuseppe Ingoglia and the Plescias much as the Ciaravino name connects to Paolo Valenti from 1883. Giovanni's brothers Pietro and Vito lived much more quietly during this period, little being known about them outside of where they lived and the legitimate businesses they engaged in.

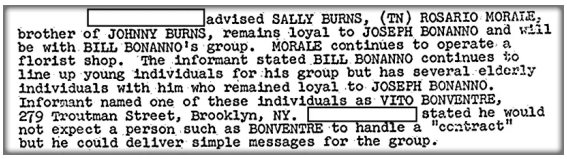
Vito (L) & Michelangelo (R) Vitale were Bonventre in-laws.

Vito Bonventre's name became somewhat relevant again during the Bonanno war after his nephew was deposed in late 1964. Though Vito was not mentioned as an active participant in the conflict, one informant described him as a loyalist of Bonanno who wouldn't participate in a "contract" but could be used to carry messages, similar to how brother-in-law Vincenzo Asaro was described at the time though Asaro was instead aligned with Gaspare DiGregorio. Bonventre's home on Troutman Street in Bushwick was the intended location of a planned 1966 peace meeting between the Bonanno and DiGregorio factions that resulted in an ambush by the latter. Joe's son Bill Bonanno and other allies survived the public shootout with DiGregorio-aligned assassins but their influence continued to wane before the Bonannos were fully cast out by 1968. Joe Bonanno petitioned other US Families for support throughout most of the 1970s but was unsuccessful, remaining shelved in Arizona.


Other than a shooting incident which took place in the vicinity of 279 Troutman Street, Brooklyn, on January 28, 1966, in which there were no known casualties, no violent action is known to have taken place against the BONANNO loyalists.

The Troutman shooting was near Vito Bonventre's home.

Vito Bonventre was one of the few living Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre relatives to remain in the New York Bonanno Family after the 1960s, Joe Bonanno's other close relatives either deceased or ostracized by the end of the decade. His in-laws the Asaros interestingly were DiGregorio supporters, placing them on different sides of the conflict. Brigida Asaro Bonventre was deceased nearly twenty years at this point so the relationship may have weakened in the interim but it's not uncommon for relatives in Cosa Nostra to side with different factions during a conflict and the Bonanno war as a whole was a testament to the division between relatives, Joe Bonanno at odds with his cousin Stefano Magaddino and other cousins like Gaspare and Pietro Magaddino siding with Bonanno.


[redacted] advised SALLY BURNS, (TN) ROSARIO MORALE, brother of JOHNNY BURNS, remains loyal to JOSEPH BONANNO and will be with BILL BONANNO's group. MORALE continues to operate a florist shop. The informant stated BILL BONANNO continues to line up young individuals for his group but has several elderly individuals with him who remained loyal to JOSEPH BONANNO. Informant named one of these individuals as VITO BONVENTRE, 279 Troutman Street, Brooklyn, NY. [redacted] stated he would not expect a person such as BONVENTRE to handle a "contract" but he could deliver simple messages for the group.

Bonventre and the Asaros had differing Family loyalties.

Vito Bonventre was reportedly a soldier under Mike Sabella in the 1970s even though fellow Asaro in-law Mickey Zaffarano was a captain at the time and the Asaros reported to him. Sabella once inherited part of Giovanni Bonventre's crew when the latter was temporarily demoted in the 1940s but Sabella himself was demoted for a time during the turbulent 1960s then became a captain again later in the '70s. It's possible Vito Bonventre ended up with Sabella through this shared crew lineage. Sabella was also a supporter of Carmine Galante, a diehard Joe Bonanno loyalist who usurped control of the Family in 1976, but Sabella was demoted after Galante's 1979 murder and Bonventre was reassigned to Armando Pollastrino followed by newly-promoted Bronx captain Dominick Trinchera. Trinchera was killed in 1981 and the 90-year-old Bonventre's trajectory from there is unknown. He died in 1988, one of the final remnants of the Family's original Castellammaresi who arrived shortly after the turn of the century.

Vito Bonventre's daughter Carmela married John Morale (b. 1912), a protege of Joe Bonanno who rose to the position of underboss following the retirement of Frank Garofalo in the late 1950s and served as acting boss for a period in the 1960s. Morale's heritage was in Baucina in Palermo, not Castellammare, but he was nonetheless western Sicilian and brought his brother Rosario into the organization. Interestingly, Vincenzo Asaro is believed to have belonged to John Morale's *decina* for a time when Morale served as captain. Morale isn't otherwise known to have been close to the Asaros but their relation through Morale's marriage to Vincenzo's niece provided an obvious link.

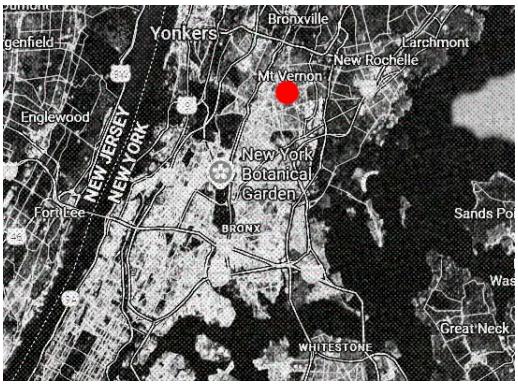
Despite remaining loyal to Joe Bonanno during the mid-1960s conflict, the Morale brothers didn't follow the Bonanno faction to the West Coast and remained in New York City. By the late 1970s they possibly belonged to the crew of Nicola "Nick the Battler" DiStefano, whose heritage was in Salemi and Castelvetrano. Though the Morales fell from the Family leadership and appear to have been non-entities in the post-Bonanno Family, Rosario's son Salvatore Morale was inducted into the Family after the books reopened in the 1970s, showing the Morales weren't entirely marginalized. John Morale died in 1984, four years before his father-in-law.

Morale (pictured) was a one-time underboss.

Another daughter of Girolamo Asaro married Giuseppe Giordano (b. 1877), a native of neighboring Alcamo who was living in Castellammare del Golfo prior to the United States. He and Giuseppa Asaro married in Manhattan in 1909, suggesting the Asaros hadn't yet moved to Boston or she stayed behind / returned for the marriage. Like his wife, Giordano had been in the United States since 1905.

The Giordanos were living in Mount Vernon according to the 1920 census, Giuseppa's brother Mariano Asaro and her sister Brigida Bonventre living there at various times in the late 1910s and early '20s. Giuseppe worked as a candy merchant during their time in Westchester County. By 1924, the Giordanos lived on Nostrand Avenue in Flatbush where Giuseppa's siblings also lived for a time. Giuseppe Giordano's naturalization that year was witnessed by his brother-in-law Michele Asaro and Vito Bonventre's brother

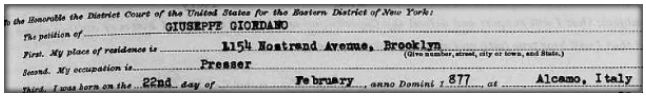
Pietro. The Giordano-Asaro union had yet to produce children and Giordano was by then working as a garment presser.



Several of Girolamo Asaro's children lived in Mt. Vernon.

By 1930 the couple was living in Brownsville a few blocks from Pitkin Avenue, which leads into East New York and is the same street the Asaros moved to later in the decade. By this time Giuseppe and Giuseppa Giordano had a three-year-old daughter and Giuseppe was working as a painter. Giuseppa's naturalization in 1940 was witnessed by her brother Giuseppe Asaro and by then the Giordanos were living back in Flatbush. She stated that her husband Giuseppe Giordano was born in Castellammare although on his own records he indicates he was born in Alcamo and moved to Castellammare.

The Giordanos were living in today's Marine Park by 1950, occupying the upper floor of their home while Giuseppa's brother Michele Asaro and his family lived below them. Giuseppe Giordano listed no employment and gave his age as seventy-five. Records for Giordano give a date of birth ranging between 1875 and 1880 although he gave a specific date of 1877 on his naturalization. He was obviously retired though it's unknown exactly when he died. Ten years his wife's senior, he was also nine years older than the eldest child of Girolamo Asaro, Mariano.


To the Honorable the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of New York:
The petition of GIUSEPPE GIORDANO
First. My place of residence is 115h Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn (Give number, street, city or town, and State.)
Second. My occupation is Presser
Third. I was born on the 22nd day of February, anno Domini 1877, at Alcamo, Italy
Giordano is largely a mystery but originally came from Alcamo.

Like his brothers-in-law Giuseppe and Michele Asaro, Giuseppe Giordano can't be definitively linked to Cosa Nostra beyond his marriage into a dominant Castellammarese mafia clan. He represents an Alcamese connection but he also lived in Castellammare del Golfo which makes him functionally Castellammarese. Giordanos from the Fiordilino clan were members of the Bonanno and Castellammare Families so the name is not unfamiliar in Castellammarese mafia circles but neither is it common. If Giuseppe Giordano

was a mafia member, he is another Asaro relative whose advanced age would make him entirely unknown to most FBI sources from the 1960s onward.

It is easy to assume all of Girolamo Asaro's sons and sons-in-laws were affiliated with Cosa Nostra in some form. Most if not all male relatives in the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre and Buccellato clans were inducted members during this era and the same is true for leading clans from many other Sicilian towns. The Profaci clan from Villabate inducted nearly all of their immediate and extended male relatives in Sicily and New York, even intermarrying with the Bonannos, and many other examples can be cited. Yet just as often these clans induct relatives somewhat selectively, either because of a cap on new members, disinterest on the part of the relative in question, or because the relative is deemed unfit for initiation. Based on the patterns we see among later Asaro descendants, where many relatives from each generation were members and associates, there is reasonable possibility some of these lesser-known individuals were involved but we simply don't know.

Joe Bonanno's web of relation proves the "rule" that virtually every male from leading clans could be inducted, with marriages designed to extend this interrelation further, but his own marriage also shows the exception. Bonanno married the daughter of Calogero LaBruzzo from Camporeale, a prominent figure in Williamsburg and a *compaesano* of early Bonanno leaders like Paolo Orlando and Nicolo Schiro. Bonanno was introduced to LaBruzzos' daughter through his mafioso uncle Pietro Bonventre and the two eventually wedded. Calogero's son Frank LaBruzzo later joined the Bonanno Family, serving as a captain and acting boss for his brother-in-law, and of course Bill Bonanno was Calogero's grandson who followed these numerous relatives into Cosa Nostra. Calogero LaBruzzo seems like an "obvious" candidate for mafia membership himself.

The Bonanno-LaBruzzo union "looks" like a mafia marriage.

According to *The Last Testament of Bill Bonanno*, however, Calogero LaBruzzo was not a made member. Bill Bonanno says that his maternal grandfather was offered membership, which is a significant detail, but turned it down upon

learning that a man he despised was also a member. As a historic mafia researcher, Calogero LaBruzzo is the exact type of figure I'd consider a "suspected member" but even after checking most of the boxes, that suspicion can be easily erased when a credible source confirms someone was never made. Even though many blood relatives and in-laws of these formative mafia clans were affiliated with the organization in some way, it is not a given. In LaBruzzo's case he was at least offered membership and therefore wasn't outright excluded, he simply chose not to join.

Giuseppe Giordano is a more probable candidate for Bonanno membership than other peripheral names given who he was related to but like Giuseppe and Michele Asaro he can't be called a "suspected member" in good faith based on the information currently available to us. His brothers-in-law Vito Bonventre and Vincenzo Asaro were confirmed members and his other in-law Mariano Asaro was once described as Girolamo Asaro's "right arm" but Mariano embodies the term "suspected member" while Giordano himself provides us with little more than a genealogical sidequest. Bonventre passed membership on to his son-in-law John Morale but neither Bonventre nor Giordano had sons, ending their direct genetic line in the Bonanno Family. Vincenzo Asaro seemingly took sole responsibility for carrying the tradition along.

A Third Generation in New York

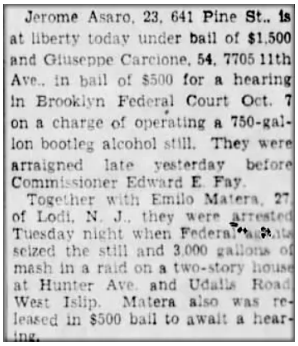
A previous section noted that Mariano Asaro's sons Jerome and Michael were criminally active and their 1952 bootlegging arrest linked them to at least one Genovese member. They were presumably Bonanno associates in their youth though their names never came up later in relation to the formal Bonanno Family. Vincenzo's sons on the other hand are well-known names in Bonanno history and one of them passed the clan's mafia legacy on to his descendants, this being the primary reason the Asaro name is known today.

Vincenzo Asaro's sons Jerome (b. 1913) and Joseph (b. 1919) became Bonanno members sometime before the late 1950s, the New York mafia's "books" closing to new members by 1958 and new initiates not brought in until 1976. Jerome "Jerry" Asaro was involved in criminal activity, though unlike his father, brother-in-law, son, grandson, and likely his grandfather Girolamo before that, he never rose higher than soldier in the Bonanno Family. Joseph too was always a soldier but connects the Asaro clan's geography to Canada.

Born under his grandfather's name of Girolamo, Jerome "Jerry" Asaro spent only a brief time in New York before moving with his parents to his mother's native Ficarazzi in Palermo. Though he returned to New York with his parents

in 1917, he apparently went back to Ficarazzi where he lived with his mother's relatives for a time as evidenced by a 1920 return trip where six-year-old Girolamo was accompanied to New York with his Macchiarella grandparents and an aunt. The group was arriving to another one of Jerry's aunts in New York, it being unclear why Jerry Asaro was apart from his parents.

Jerry Asaro's first significant arrest was in 1936. The 23-year-old Asaro of Pine Street in East New York was arrested with 54-year-old Giuseppe Carcione of Dyker Heights for operating an illegal alcohol still in West Islip, Long Island. Asaro lived just blocks away from father Vincenzo on Pitkin Avenue and was a short walk away from "the Hole". Emilio Matera, 27, of Lodi, NJ, was also arrested in connection with the operation. In 1966, the FBI identified future Colombo captain John "Johnny Irish" Matera (murdered 1981) as a criminal associate of Jerry Asaro, Matera operating under John Franzese in the same Brooklyn-Queens area. It's unknown if John Matera connects to Asaro's 1936 associate Emilio Matera in New Jersey but is a noteworthy coincidence if nothing else.



Jerome Asaro, 23, 641 Pine St., is at liberty today under bail of $1,500 and Giuseppe Carcione, 54, 7705 11th Ave., in bail of $500 for a hearing in Brooklyn Federal Court Oct. 7 on a charge of operating a 750-gallon bootleg alcohol still. They were arraigned late yesterday before Commissioner Edward E. Fay.

Together with Emilo Matera, 27, of Lodi, N. J., they were arrested Tuesday night when Federal agents seized the still and 3,000 gallons of mash in a raid on a two-story house at Hunter Ave. and Udalls Road, West Islip. Matera also was released in $500 bail to await a hearing.

Asaro's early associates were a Carcione & Matera.

Asaro's older 1936 associate Giuseppe Carcione interestingly spent time living in Massachusetts like Girolamo Asaro, being there as far back as 1914, and he later died in Los Angeles in 1958. Carcione was from the mafia stronghold of Santa Flavia, near Bagheria, which doesn't typically show up in New York but produced a significant number of early Milwaukee members. The Bagherese network was not particularly significant in New York after the first decade of the 20th century but greatly informed the membership not only in Wisconsin but also Chicago, Utica, the California Bay Area, and other American cities. His advanced age makes it impossible to determine where he fit into the New York mafia landscape but his residence in Dyker Heights and roots in the Bagheria area could have placed him in the Colombo Family orbit, the Family dominated by Villabatesi with strong connections to Bagheria.

LCNBios published an article on Colombo member Paul D'Amico that states D'Amico was born in Bagheria in 1914 and his mother was a Carcione.

D'Amico's father Michele was also born specifically in Santa Flavia. Paul D'Amico was a member of *capodecina* Simone Andolino's crew and interestingly Andolino's family was from Bagheria and his mother too was a Carcione. The D'Amico and Andolino families both lived in New Castle, Pennsylvania, prior to Brooklyn and LCNBios reported that the two families were connected going back to Bagheria. There is thus some probabiliy that Giuseppe Carcione was in fact an early Colombo figure and potentially related to D'Amico and Andolino.

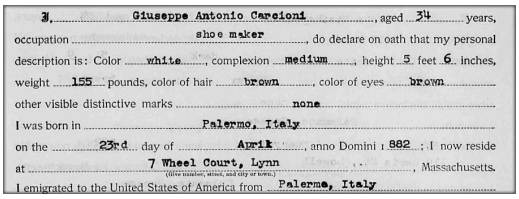
Jerry Asaro's mother is also relevant to Carcione's Sicilian origins given Anna Macchiarella Asaro was from Ficarazzi, directly in between Villabate and Bagheria, and the Asaros spent several years living there shortly after Jerry was born. Old line Chicago member Giuseppe Priola was from Ficarazzi and his son Philip joined the Rockford Family. The early Bagherese faction in Chicago under Giuseppe Aiello were national allies of the Castellammaresi during the onset of the Castellammarese War, Aiello teaming with Stefano Magaddino of Buffalo and Gaspare Milazzo of Detroit against Joe Masseria and Joe Bonanno claimed Aiello and Milazzo were *compari*. Mafiosi from Castellammare evidently gravitate toward those from the Bagheria-Villabate area, the longstanding alliance and marital union between the Bonannos and Profacis being another example. Jerry Asaro's mixed heritage in Castellammare and Ficarazzi brings to mind Bill Bonanno's marriage to Joe Profaci's niece, the Profacis' hometown of Villabate adjoining Ficarazzi.

Carcione's hometown of Santa Flavia (R) is close to Ficarazzi (L).

Giuseppe Carcione had lived in Lynn north of Boston, not the Quincy area like Girolamo Asaro, but appears to have been there during the same general period the Asaros lived in Massachusetts. Jerry's father Vincenzo had also lived in Dyker Heights like Carcione just years earlier which may have provided a more practical connection. Vincenzo was described throughout the 1930s as a prolific bootlegger with operations that extended to Long Island so it's possible he was a partner in this operation although he was not

among the arrestees. That Vincenzo Asaro and his family, including a young Jerry, lived briefly in Ficarazzi in the 1910s could have helped facilitate relationships to figures like Carcione who came from that region.

Carcione's presence in Massachusetts is relevant on its own as in addition to its relationship to the Asaros, suspected members of the early Boston mafia were from Termini Imerese, a town heavily associated with the Bagherese network. *Comuni* from the eastern side of Palermo produced mafioso immigrants who often lived in the same American colonies, Chicago most notably. New England cooperator Vincent Teresa's family was originally from Termini and he described his grandfather as an early mafia "Don" from "Palermo". Gaspare Messina's suspected predecessor Gaspare DiCola was another Termitano mafioso in Boston. Much as Bagheresi coexisted with Termitani in Chicago, Carcione would have easily fit into the Palermitano mafia community in Boston which also had a strong early presence from Trapani.



I, Giuseppe Antonio Carcioni, aged 34 years,
occupation shoe maker, do declare on oath that my personal
description is: Color white, complexion medium, height 5 feet 6 inches,
weight 155 pounds, color of hair brown, color of eyes brown
other visible distinctive marks none
I was born in Palermo, Italy
on the 23rd day of April, anno Domini 1902; I now reside
at 7 Wheel Court, Lynn, Massachusetts.
(Give number, street, and city or town.)
I emigrated to the United States of America from Palermo, Italy

Carcione's residence in Boston fits his eastern Palermo origins.

Whatever the basis was for his collaboration with Giuseppe Carcione, Jerry Asaro served sixty days in jail for the 1936 alcohol charge. He was living in the area of East New York by 1940 and according to his WWII draft card Asaro was employed by John Bonventre, the brother of Jerry's marital uncle Vito Bonventre. Though John Bonventre did operate in the garment industry like so many of the Asaros, the business that employed Jerry was the LaBruzzo & Bonventre funeral parlor. The exact timeline of Vincenzo Asaro's captain role is unknown but it's possible the Asaros belonged to the *decina* of John Bonventre at some point given the close relation through Vito Bonventre, the other longstanding links to the Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan, and Jerry Asaro's employment with Bonventre. That Jerry Asaro was employed by the LaBruzzo-Bonventre funeral home in 1940 indicates the Asaros were at this time very close to Joe Bonanno himself.

Jerry Asaro worked for the Bonventre & LaBruzzo funeral parlor.

During World War II Jerry worked as a dockbuilder for the US Navy in Bayonne, New Jersey, and was employed through Carpenter's Union Local 1456 throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s. He was arrested for bookmaking in 1941 and again in 1949 on a policy charge. Though I initially believed the 1949 arrest referred to his namesake cousin, Mariano's criminal son Jerome, Jerry Asaro's police record attributes the policy arrest to him, Vincenzo's son. This Italian lottery operation was based out Brooklyn and the East Village, the lottery slips printed at a shop in the area of Bushwick and Ridgewood.

Asaro had by then married Josephine Valenti and they had five children, including sons Vincent and Gaspare. The Valentis traced their heritage to Santa Margherita di Belice in Agrigento near the Trapani border which rules out a connection to the Castellammarese Valentis although Santa Margherita did produce a handful of known Bonanno members, including Antonino "Nino" Adamo who was a close associate of Giovanni Bonventre. By 1950, Jerry and his family were living on Sutter Avenue and numerous members of the Valenti family lived alongside them throughout "the Hole" neighborhood.

The desolate "Hole" became the Asaro clan's stronghold.

In 1952, Asaro was accused of setting fire to an Ozone Park lingerie shop owned by his daughters. A witness had seen him park his car and approach the store only to return to the car a short time later, at which point the store was on fire. The shop's $5000 insurance policy was set to expire in a matter of

days and Jerry Asaro was reportedly $7000 in debt. Asaro also became involved in several construction and remodeling firms by the late 1950s and was suspected of facilitating fraudulent bank loans in connection with these businesses.

Held in Fires In Daughters' Lingerie Shop

Trouble piled up yesterday for Jerome Asaro, 39, an East New York contractor, after a police investigation of two minor fires early yesterday in the lingerie shop of his daughters at 74-23 101st Ave., Ozone Park, Queens.

Asaro, who lives at 1484 Sutter Ave., Brooklyn, was accused by Ozone Park police of setting both fires, which caused total damage amounting to $500. His daughters, Lenore and Anita, were not involved, police said.

Asaro was accused of arson at his daughters' lingerie shop.

Jerry Asaro was presumably in his father's *decina* when Vincenzo Asaro served as captain though the exact years of his father's term are unknown. The January 1965 FBI bug where Stefano Magaddino discusses the Asaros makes reference to both of Vincenzo's sons, Joseph and Jerry. After the conversation touches on Joseph Asaro, Magaddino is reminded of an incident involving Vincenzo's eldest son, who we know to be Jerry. Magaddino strongly disliked Jerry, telling a story about Jerry Asaro's attendance at the 1957 funeral of Magaddino's brother Gaspare Magaddino in Buffalo. At the funeral, Jerry openly disparaged other Bonanno members and leaders in earshot of other mafiosi and an offended Magaddino reported this to "Ciccino" in New York, most likely underboss Frank Garofalo, who passed the information to Joe Bonanno.

Bonanno sought Magaddino's counsel on how to handle Asaro's infraction, particularly with regard to whether or not Jerry Asaro should be shelved. Magaddino felt it reflected poorly on Bonanno's leadership to ask Magaddino's opinion on how to punish Bonanno's own soldier. Jerry's sharp tongue and lack of discretion complements descriptions of his father Vincenzo and son Vinny's own volatile tendencies. Magaddino doesn't explicitly state what became of the incident but the story suggests Jerry Asaro received some form of punishment, possibly a temporary visit to the shelf.

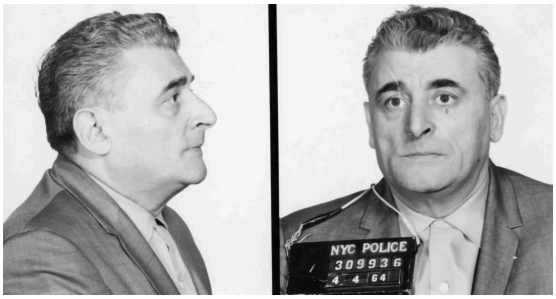
Though his father Vincenzo may have been in their in-law John Morale's crew after his demotion, one source reported that Jerry Asaro was under *capodecina* Gaspare DiGregorio by the 1960s. DiGregorio along with his brothers and cousins were maternal cousins of the Magaddinos through the Ciaravino name and Gaspare's first wife was Stefano Magaddino's sister, though she died young. DiGregorio was rumored to have served as a gunman

for Salvatore Maranzano during the Castellammarese War then rose up as a top captain during Joe Bonanno's decades as Family boss beginning in 1931. Vincenzo Asaro was noted by the FBI as a close associate of DiGregorio and after the death of DiGregorio's first wife, Stefano Magaddino's sister, Gaspare married Vita LaSalle whose mother's maiden name was originally Asaro, relation undetermined.

Jerry Asaro may have reported to DiGregorio (pictured).

Whether it was because of Vincenzo's grudge against Bonanno, Jerry's punishment for the Buffalo incident, a personal loyalty to Gaspare DiGregorio, pressure from the Commission, or a combination of factors, the Asaros sided with DiGregorio rather than Bonanno when the latter was deposed by the Commission in favor of Gaspare DiGregorio in late 1964. Jerry Asaro was then reportedly aligned with new boss Paul Sciacca after DiGregorio stepped down in 1967 though the crew Jerry belonged to throughout the conflict is unconfirmed, there being many promotions, demotions, and reassignments as the Family fought to achieve stability. Near the end of the decade he was briefly profiled in newspapers alongside other Bonanno members, this being the most substantial coverage of Jerry Asaro in his lifetime.

Asaro was arrested twice in 1964, first for grand larceny then for possession of a loaded revolver and received two years probation. He suffered a heart attack in 1965 and by the late 1960s he was living in the Long Beach neighborhood of Long Island where he reportedly ran a bookmaking operation. Mariano Asaro's son Jerome lived in Long Beach as well. Jerry worked as a salesman for Astro Fence, a fence-building business technically owned by his estranged wife and operated by son Vinny.

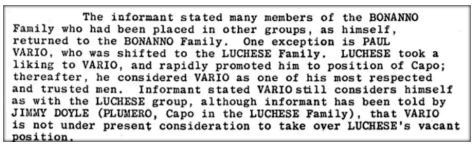


Asaro experienced legal problems and poor health in the ‘60s.

Jerry spent many years living in the general area of East New York and Ozone Park near his father, eventually operating a store called “the Family Browse” in Laurelton, Queens, and frequenting the Ozone Park Bar & Grill. He also spent time at Robert’s Lounge, a location linked to his son Vinny and a major hangout for Jimmy Burke, the Lucchese Vario crew, and virtually all Cosa Nostra figures active in these neighborhoods. One of Asaro’s friends from the Robert’s Lounge crowd was Henry Hill of *Goodfellas* fame, who Asaro admitted he played cards with during an FBI interview years before Hill’s cooperation.

Jerry was active in Bonanno activity into the 1970s, being arrested in 1970 alongside leading Bonanno figures Paul Sciacca, Natale Evola, Philip Rastelli, Mike Sabella, Vincenzo Morsellino, and other members and associates. That same year, the FBI was told Asaro was a loanshark and gambler who operated out of the La Sorrento restaurant in Oceanside. He was also surveilled associating with Lucchese captain Paul Vario during the early 1970s, this friendship continuing through Jerry’s son Vinny. Twenty years earlier, in 1950, Paul’s brother Lenny Vario lived next door to Jerry Asaro’s in-laws the Valentis at the edge of “the Hole” in East New York and Ozone Park

Bonanno member informant Willie Dara once commented to the FBI that Paul Vario was originally affiliated with the Bonanno Family and later joined the Luccheses. It’s unlikely Vario was made with the Bonannos and transferred, this arrangement being rare in that era of New York and Vario successor Al D’Arco stating the Vario brothers were sponsored into the Lucchese Family by Joe Schiavo, the only known Lucchese member from Castellammare del Golfo. Dara though had been a Bonanno member as far back as 1949/50, grew up near the Varios, and was a personal friend of Paul Vario for many years which gives the claim some credibility, at least as it pertains to Vario’s initial association with the mafia. Dara and his cousin Mike Sabella were also placed under Vario’s protection during the Bonanno war during the 1960s, as previously mentioned. The Lucchese captain’s relationship to the Bonannos was not merely criminal or social but included political affairs.

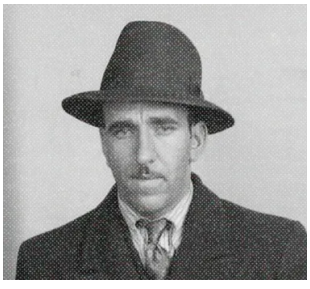


The informant stated many members of the BONANNO Family who had been placed in other groups, as himself, returned to the BONANNO Family. One exception is PAUL VARIO, who was shifted to the LUCHESE Family. LUCHESE took a liking to VARIO, and rapidly promoted him to position of Capo; thereafter, he considered VARIO as one of his most respected and trusted men. Informant stated VARIO still considers himself as with the LUCHESE group, although informant has been told by JIMMY DOYLE (PLUMERO, Capo in the LUCHESE Family), that VARIO is not under present consideration to take over LUCHESE's vacant position.

Dara believed Vario started out under the Bonanno Family.

It would be unsurprising if the Varios began as Bonanno associates given their Trapanese origins and close relationship with members from the same neighborhood like the Asaros and Dara. Henry Hill's character in *Goodfellas* states that his mother approved of his relationship to the Varios (fictionalized as the "Ciceros") because they "came from the same part of Sicily" as her family. Hill's mother appears to trace her heritage to Barrafranca in what is today Enna province, not Trapani like the Varios, but this area was nonetheless Sicilian and relevant to the mafia network. Although *Goodfellas* is a dramatic telling and the anecdote is fleeting, Sicilian connections may have been relevant to the Varios' identity given the Varios were from Monte San Giuliano, its ties to the Castellammarese mafia documented as far back as 1883 and the town showing up frequently through this article.

Paul's brother Leonard Vario, in addition to living near the Asaro clan in "the Hole" for a time, also witnessed the naturalization of Gambino member Anthony Accardi's father, the Accardis being from Vita like Settimo Accardi and his *compaesani* in the Lucchese Family's New Jersey faction. The Varios associated with a wide range of figures in Brooklyn-Queens, including non-Italians, but they also gravitated specifically toward fellow Sicilans, particularly those who shared their Trapanese background. Just as Girolamo Asaro and the Castellammare Family of 1896 associated closely with mafiosi from Monte San Giuliano, the Varios found themselves working alongside Castellammaresi like Joe Schiavo and the Asaros.



Vario associated with fellow Trapanesi in New York City.

Returning to Jerry Asaro, in 1972 he was arrested for driving while intoxicated and police discovered a shotgun in his possession which led to an additional firearm charge. An avid hunter, Asaro claimed the gun was simply used for hunting. By the following year he operated a luncheonette on Pitkin Avenue, the same street his parents lived on for decades. During this period he was

placed in the crew of brother-in-law Mickey Zaffarano, a newly-promoted *capodecina* in the Family under the leadership of Castellammarese boss Natale Evola. Zaffarano was non-Sicilian but Evola, who headed the group during the early 1970s, was assisted by other Castellammaresi who joined the leadership during this period like *consigliere* Joseph DiFilippi and captains Giuseppe Buccellato, Sereno "Bobby" Tartamella, and the latter's cousin Frank Tartamella.

During the Evola years the Family also began to reinvigorate its Sicilian immigrant faction. Buccellato's predecessor in the areas of Bushwick, Ridgewood, and Middle Village was Giovanni Fiordilino who played a large role in these connections, Fiordilino serving as a *capodecina* in the post-Bonanno period and frequently traveling to Sicily. Fiordilino may have been inducted first in Castellammare and transferred, one of his brothers and a father being affiliated there, and some of his relatives were among the Sicilian immigrants made into the Bonannos later in the 1970s. At least one of Fiordilino's relatives, Santo "Toni" Giordano, may have reported to the Zaffarano crew for a time alongside the Asaros.

Fiordilino represented a new wave of Castellammarese immigrants.

Natale Evola died in 1973 and his underboss Philip Rastelli was elected as the Bonanno *rappresentante* though he'd be incarcerated by 1976. Carmine Galante was released from prison in 1974 and was identified by one source as a *capodecina* in an FBI report shortly before his release, suggesting he'd been promoted again after losing his position the previous decade while serving a long narcotics charge. Galante became the acting boss in 1976 and over the next several years placed loyalists and new allies in positions of power, effectively usurping control of the Family before declaring himself official boss in 1977. Mickey Zaffarano was one of the top capains in the Family for much of the 1970s and was reportedly among Galante's top supporters but by then Jerry Asaro was beginning to fade from view.

Valenti's Perspective

Gasper “Gary” Valenti, whose father Anthony was the brother of Jerry Asaro’s wife Josephine, making Jerry his uncle, became a confidential informant in 2008 and wore a wire on cousin Vinny through the early 2010s. Valenti later testified against his cousin and provided background not only on Vinny Asaro but also the broader Asaro clan, particularly Jerry. Valenti said he first became aware of Jerry Asaro’s membership in Cosa Nostra during his youth based on the respect his uncle was shown. Vinny later told Gary outright that Jerry was a member. Anthony Valenti, Gary’s father and Jerry Asaro’s brother-in-law, was not associated with the mafia.

Valenti (L) was a cousin of Vinny Asaro (R).

After committing crimes as a teenager with Jerry’s other son Gaspare Asaro, named for maternal grandfather Gaspare Valenti like “Gary”, Jerry Asaro recruited Gary Valenti to commit a robbery with two other associates of the elder Asaro, Frank Roder and Marco Leonetti. Asaro instructed his three underlings to rob a newspaper press on Long Island but due to a miscommunication Valenti showed up to the robbery dressed in a suit and ended up committing the robbery with a pellet gun, netting only $63. Following the robbery, Jerry Asaro asked Valenti if he wanted to continue with “this life” to which the nephew agreed, making him an “on record” associate of his uncle. A close neighbor of Jerry’s son Vinny Asaro in “the Hole” neighborhood, Valenti began committing crimes with Vinny and though both cousins were technically associates of Jerry Asaro at the time, Valenti began taking direction primarily from Vinny who was still years off from being inducted.

Another early crime given to Valenti by his uncle Jerry Asaro was the robbery of a bowling alley with a catering hall inside of it. The hall was used for weddings and the company's earnings from these weddings were taken to a certain bank after each event. Valenti dressed as a woman, wearing a wig, red boots, and a woman's coat, and waited with associate Joseph Bulger. While they were waiting, a carload of men started harassing Valenti because he was dressed like a woman yet had a beard. Bulger pulled a pistol on their antagonists in an effort to defend Valenti's "honor" but Valenti told him to

leave it alone given they were waiting to commit a robbery. The heist was successful despite the incident beforehand and a few thousand dollars were split between Jerry Asaro, Vinny Asaro, Bulger, and Valenti, though Valenti received very little of the money.

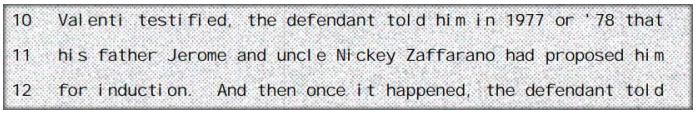
Gary Valenti doesn't give the exact year he was put on record with Jerry Asaro but he was formally "with" him by the late 1960s when Vinny Asaro, Jimmy Burke, and others were arrested at the warehouse of Paul Katz, a hijacking associate. The Katz murder and its aftermath will be elaborated on in more detail later, but most of the arrestees were quickly freed, leaving Vinny Asaro locked up by himself. The younger Asaro complained to Gary that he'd been abandoned so Valenti took the complaint to Jerry Asaro. Following Vinny's release, Paul Katz disappeared. Katz was killed by Vinny Asaro and Jimmy Burke, Valenti assisting with the burial at a residential property the latter inherited from his deceased father.

Katz (pictured) fell victim to Asaro & Burke.

A few days after the Katz murder, Valenti was taken by Vinny Asaro to meet with the elder Jerry Asaro at a nearby diner. Jerry apologized and said that Valenti shouldn't have been involved in the Katz murder, telling him this would be the only time they'd ever discuss the murder. Valenti asked Jerry Asaro who else knew about Valenti's involvement aside from Burke and Vinny Asaro, Jerry answering that Paul Vario and himself were the only others aware of his participation. The Katz murder is the only known murder Jerry Asaro has been linked to, Asaro approving the murder rather than directly participating. His son Vincent and father Vincenzo were both accused of personally carrying out at least one murder but Jerry, like his namesake grandfather Girolamo, can only be linked to one murder in a supervisory capacity.

Gary Valenti testified that Jerry was one of son Vinny Asaro's sponsors into the Bonanno Family, which he believed occurred around a year or two after the "books" opened in 1976. According to Valenti, Vinny was proposed by both Jerry Asaro and Vinny's uncle Mickey Zaffarano. Though traditionally a proposed member requires only one sponsor, other sources have indicated the New York mafia at times utilized two sponsors, Willie Dara stating he was sponsored by both Mike Sabella and the mysterious "Mariano" nearly thirty

years earlier. Valenti was then reassigned to Vinny Asaro after the latter's induction. Jerry Asaro was reportedly an alcoholic and suffered a second heart attack in 1974, FBI reports describing him as largely inactive by the mid-1970s and doing only sporadic work for one of the family's fence installation companies.


10 Valenti testified, the defendant told him in 1977 or '78 that
11 his father Jerome and uncle Nickey Zaffarano had proposed him
12 for induction. And then once it happened, the defendant told

Valenti was told by Vinny that Jerry Asaro served as one of his sponsors.

Jerry died of natural causes in 1977 but interestingly Gary Valenti testified that four associates previously on record with Jerry Asaro stored some of the loot obtained from the December 1978 Lufthansa Heist on Vinny Asaro's behalf. Valenti identified these associates as Dominic Gennaro, Frank Roder, Johnny Tagliaferro, and Ronald Cecchini. Roder had been associated with Jerry Asaro since at least the mid-1960s and by 1978 this group was presumably on record with Vinny Asaro, following a similar trajectory as Valenti.

When Jerry Asaro died, his car was given to Gary Valenti and Vinny Asaro also had a custom ring made for Valenti modeled after Jerry Asaro's signature cufflinks. Valenti never made a single payment on the car and it was subsequently repossessed. After receiving the custom ring, Valenti immediately pawned it. Gary Valenti was a degenerate gambler frequently in debt and even symbolic gifts intended to commemorate his close relationship to Jerry Asaro were quickly exchanged for cash.

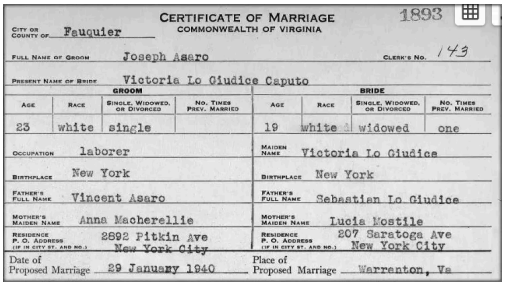
In addition to Valenti's personal knowledge of Jerry Asaro's Bonanno membership, he was told that Jerry's father Vincenzo had also been a member. He was aware of Jerry's brother-in-law Mickey Zaffarano as well but didn't mention Jerry's brother Joseph in his testimony nor other older generations of Asaro relatives, some of whom died long before Valenti's time. He identified numerous current relatives of the Asaros who belong to or associate with the modern Bonanno Family, too, including his own son Anthony, but it's unknown if he was aware of Vinny's full lineage going back to Girolamo Asaro.

Valenti was aware of Jerry (L) & Vincenzo's (R) membership.

It's of course possible Gary Valenti had knowledge of other Asaros and their relatives who were involved in the mafia and it simply didn't come out during the truncated question and answer session in court. It should be noted that even though Valenti was a blood cousin of Vinny Asaro, he does not share blood relation with Jerry, Vincenzo, nor any of the older Asaros, his relation coming through Vinny's mother. Valenti was not a made member but he was a confidant of Vinny Asaro for decades and thus far he is the only Asaro relative to cooperate with the FBI.

Joseph Asaro & Montreal

Jerry's younger brother Joseph Asaro was born in New York in 1919 two years after the family returned from their stay in Ficarazzi. Though his wife was from New York City, the couple married in Virginia in 1940 and Joseph was then working as a laborer. His wife's family, the LoGiudices, were from Vizzini in Catania province, their eastern Sicilian background contrasting with brother Jerry's marriage into the Valentis from Santa Margherita di Belice which is in Agrigento but directly borders Trapani. Joseph's wife was only 19-years-old but she was listed as already widowed and still carried her previous husband's name of Caputo. It's unknown why the couple chose to marry in Virginia despite both of them living in New York.



CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE 1893
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

City or County of: Fauquier
Full Name of Groom: Joseph Asaro — Clerk's No. 143
Present Name of Bride: Victoria Lo Giudice Caputo

GROOM				BRIDE			
Age	Race	Single, Widowed, or Divorced	No. Times Prev. Married	Age	Race	Single, Widowed, or Divorced	No. Times Prev. Married
23	white	single		19	white	widowed	one

Occupation	laborer	Maiden Name	Victoria Lo Giudice
Birthplace	New York	Birthplace	New York
Father's Full Name	Vincent Asaro	Father's Full Name	Sebastian Lo Giudice
Mother's Maiden Name	Anna Macherellie	Mother's Maiden Name	Lucia Mostile
Residence (P. O. Address or No. and St. and No.)	2892 Pitkin Ave New York City	Residence (P. O. Address or No. and St. and No.)	207 Saratoga Ave New York City
Date of Proposed Marriage	29 January 1940	Place of Proposed Marriage	Warrenton, Va

Joseph inexplicably married in Virginia.

Joseph gained notoriety when he was convicted on an armed robbery charge in 1944 and sentenced to 10 to 30 years in prison. Early that year, Asaro and associate Joseph Chirico accosted a sanitation employee with a metal pipe and badly beat him with a bag of pennies he was carrying, intending to rob him of $500. The men were arrested after a chase and the resulting first degree robbery conviction sent both assailants to Sing Sing. Two years previous, Joseph Asaro had been linked to a firearms violation involving his cousin Michael Asaro, the son of Joseph's uncle Mariano, and the two Asaros were suspected of plotting an armed robbery, as mentioned in a previous section.

After serving approximately seven years on the armed robbery conviction from 1944, Joseph was paroled in 1951. He was then declared delinquent by the parole board in 1953 and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Joseph Asaro mirrored his grandfather Girolamo in that he chose to flee to another country rather than face incarceration.

As a federal fugitive, Joseph Asaro eventually made his way to Montreal where he found employment at a night club owned by Montreal-based Bonanno leader Vincenzo "Vic" Cotroni. The Family's Montreal crew was under captain Carmine Galante through the end of the 1950s but by the early 1960s it was given autonomy as its own *decina* under Vic Cotroni, a Calabrian from Mammola in Reggio province whose brothers Giuseppe and Frank were also members of the crew and involved in large-scale drug trafficking. Galante, the vicious Castellammarese protege of Joe Bonanno, once supervised a sprawling *decina* that included members in most New York City boroughs as well as New Jersey, Canada, and possibly Upstate New York. Joe Asaro's brother-in-law Mickey Zaffarano was identified as belonging to the Galante crew in New York during this period.

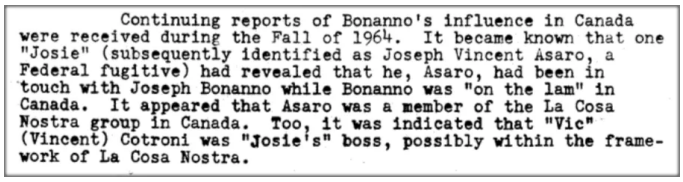
The Calabrian Cotroni emerged as a Montreal Bonanno leader.

Carmine Galante was living in Montreal for part of the 1950s, this location central to the drug trafficking network he supervised, and in Montreal he began inducting local figures with the intention of expanding the Montreal faction's size and influence. It's unconfirmed if Joseph Asaro was first made in New York or if his induction occurred after he fled to Canada but his move there came at a time when more emphasis was being placed on Montreal by Joe Bonanno himself. Bonanno had business interests in Montreal, applied for Canadian citizenship, and even served a short term in a Quebec jail during a Canadian visit after falsely claiming to have never been convicted of a crime in the United States when in fact he'd been cited for a labor violation.

In late 1964, the FBI received information that indicated Joseph Asaro was a formal member of the Montreal *decina* under Cotroni and reported that Asaro made contact with Joe Bonanno when the latter visited Canada, an interesting

detail given Asaro's father and brother were reportedly at odds with Bonanno's faction in New York. There were longstanding rumors and circumstantial evidence that Bonanno was an investor in the Montreal-based Saputo Foods, run by Montelepre native Giuseppe Saputo, a *compaesano* and close friend of Wisconsin-based Bonanno member Giovanni DiBella who ran Grande Cheese. An FBI source stated the belief that DiBella was originally made in Sicily, Montelepre being near Partinico, and he initially stopped in Detroit when he arrived in America although DiBella's brother Giovanbattista had longstanding ties to the Bonanno Family dating back to Nicolo Schiro in Williamsburg.

Bonanno's son Bill also traveled to Montreal on multiple occasions in the 1960s and the organization's leadership included Montreal in Family politics. In an unrelated tangent on the same January 1965 FBI bug where Stefano Magaddino discusses the Asaros, Magaddino tells the visiting Bonanno leaders that Joe Bonanno was approved to induct ten members in Montreal but defied Commission orders by exceeding that number, other sources between the mid-1960s and early 2000s consistently stating that the Bonanno Family had around twenty members in the Montreal *decina*.

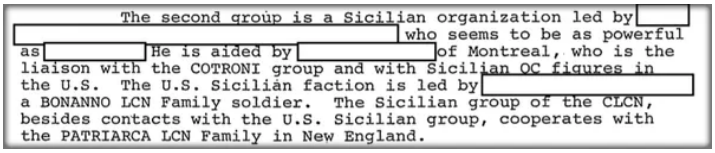


Continuing reports of Bonanno's influence in Canada were received during the Fall of 1964. It became known that one "Josie" (subsequently identified as Joseph Vincent Asaro, a Federal fugitive) had revealed that he, Asaro, had been in touch with Joseph Bonanno while Bonanno was "on the lam" in Canada. It appeared that Asaro was a member of the La Cosa Nostra group in Canada. Too, it was indicated that "Vic" (Vincent) Cotroni was "Josie's" boss, possibly within the framework of La Cosa Nostra.

The FBI believed Asaro had direct contact with Bonanno in Canada.

Coverage of Montreal is prone to distortion and misunderstanding but the formal crew was comprised of members with Sicilian and Calabrian heritage in addition to other Italian mafiosi who associated with these ethnic factions. There is very little inside intelligence on the Bonanno Family's Montreal crew, thus most of its history and membership is speculative or based on external criminal relationships that don't necessarily reflect the formal arrangements within the *decina*. A longstanding mafia-linked colony in Montreal comprised of immigrants from Agrigento dated as far back as the 1910s and several Bonanno figures had documented ties to Canada going back to the 1920s and '30s. Though Carmine Galante is often credited with organizing the local group into a Bonanno crew and expanding the membership there may have been existing Bonanno members or other Cosa Nostra affiliates in the area in the decades prior, we simply lack the resources necessary to make that determination.

The confirmed Sicilian members who belonged to the Bonanno Family in Montreal by the 1960s were primarily from Agrigento, this including a strong network from Cattolica Eraclea and Siculiana, while the Calabrian element was from Reggio Calabria and had links to the 'ndrangheta. A member of the latter faction, Paolo Violi, was the son of 'dranghetista Domenico Violi from Sinopoli and married into the Luppinos of Hamilton, Ontario, who were themselves originally 'ndranghetisti from Oppido Mamertina affiliated with Stefano Magaddino's Buffalo Family. Violi became an acting captain in the 1970s and was recorded by the RCMP in 1973 telling a visiting Sicilian mafioso that Sicilian *uomo d'onore* can transfer into the Bonanno Family's Montreal crew but must endure a multi-year probationary period and even then can only transfer if an open slot exists, similar to member inductions. The visiting Sicilian also updated Violi on goings-on within the Sicilan mafia, Violi expressing familiarity with the names and politics at play overseas. In his book *Men of Dishonor*, Catania *pentito* Antonino Calderone discussed how Violi traveled to Sicily and met with him and other Sicilan mafiosi though Calderone appeared disgusted by the prospect of a Calabrian having been inducted into Cosa Nostra.

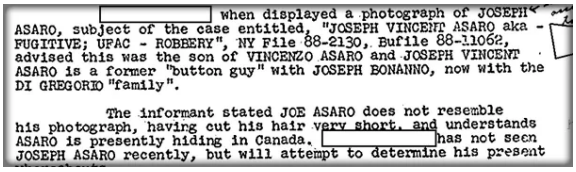

The second group is a Sicilian organization led by [redacted] who seems to be as powerful as [redacted] He is aided by [redacted] of Montreal, who is the liaison with the COTRONI group and with Sicilian OC figures in the U.S. The U.S. Sicilian faction is led by [redacted] a BONANNO LCN Family soldier. The Sicilian group of the CLCN, besides contacts with the U.S. Sicilian group, cooperates with the PATRIARCA LCN Family in New England.

Sicilian-born mafiosi operated in and around the Montreal *decina*.

Tensions would flare between the so-called "Sicilian" and "Calabrian" factions (though affiliation with these factions wasn't always that cut and dry), resulting in several murders in the 1970s, but the Sicilian-American Joseph Asaro mingled closely with the Calabrian Cotronis not only as a mafia member but also as an employee and personal friend. Joseph was no longer in Montreal when these tensions boiled over, however. A 1966 raid by Canadian law enforcement revealed a meeting between "Josie" Asaro, his visiting father Vincenzo, and the Cotroni brothers, Vic and Frank. The meeting was held at the home of Vic Cotroni's mistress and Cotroni offered large sums of cash to police which netted him a bribery charge. It was revealed that Joe Asaro, estranged from his wife in New York, had also married a friend of Cotroni's mistress, placing him further in Cotroni's inner circle during his time in Canada.

Joseph Asaro (pictured) associated closely with Cotroni.

Joseph Asaro was subsequently sent back to Dannemora in New York to serve the remainder of his armed robbery sentence. His specific year of release is unknown but Asaro died in 1971 and was waked at a funeral home owned by Lucchese associate Steven Oddo, one of Paul Vario's close friends who was mistakenly included as a Lucchese member on some FBI lists due to his close relationship with Vario. The Oddos came from Bagheria, bringing to mind Jerry Asaro's early bootlegging associate Giuseppe Carcione from Santa Flavia as well as Jerry and Joseph's mother Anna Macchiarella's hometown of Ficarazzi.



[redacted] when displayed a photograph of JOSEPH ASARO, subject of the case entitled, "JOSEPH VINCENT ASARO aka - FUGITIVE; UFAC - ROBBERY", NY File 88-2130, Bufile 88-11062, advised this was the son of VINCENZO ASARO and JOSEPH VINCENT ASARO is a former "button guy" with JOSEPH BONANNO, now with the DI GREGORIO "family".

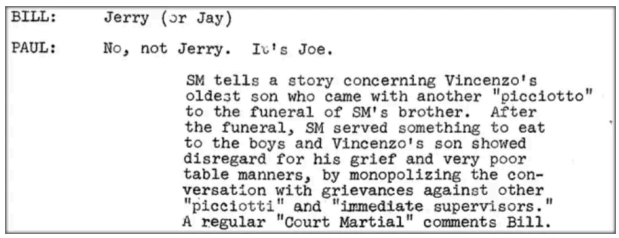
The informant stated JOE ASARO does not resemble his photograph, having cut his hair very short, and understands ASARO is presently hiding in Canada. [redacted] has not seen JOSEPH ASARO recently, but will attempt to determine his present

Asaro's departure from New York ties him primarily to Canada.

There is no information suggesting Joseph Asaro remained active in Bonanno affairs post-Montreal despite his confirmed membership. His extensive legal trouble and premature passing left little window for him to regain a foothold in New York or elsewhere. However, the clan's connection to Montreal did continue through in-law Mickey Zaffarano, a Bonanno captain by the early 1970s. Zaffarano was utilized during this period as a liaison to Montreal, even traveling to meet with acting captain Paolo Violi in 1972 to mediate a dispute between Violi and soldier Nicolo Rizzuto, a Cattolicense troublemaker from the Sicilian faction.

Bonanno *capodecina* Giuseppe Buccellato was also reportedly sent to Montreal to offer guidance. Buccellato was part of the same Buccellato clan from the 1896 Castellammare investigation that charged Girolamo with ordering Martino Buccellato to kill Giuseppe Costa. Mickey Zaffarano also chaired a Montreal sitdown that year alongside Nicolo Alfano, an elder Bonanno leader with his own strong ties to Montreal and Hamilton. Coincidentally, Alfano may be one of the men on the same January 1965 FBI

tape where Stefano Magaddino discusses Girolamo and Vincenzo Asaro. Magaddino briefly mentions Joseph Asaro too on the 1965 tape though nothing of substance is said, this prompting the story about Jerry Asaro's disrespectful behavior at Gaspare Magaddino's funeral.



BILL: Jerry (or Jay)

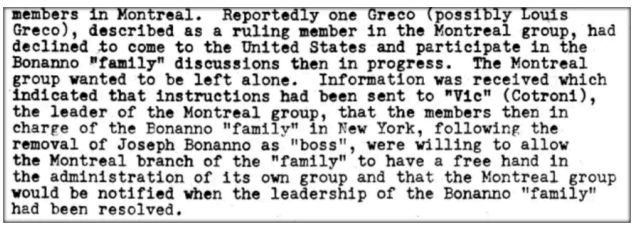
PAUL: No, not Jerry. It's Joe.

SM tells a story concerning Vincenzo's oldest son who came with another "picciotto" to the funeral of SM's brother. After the funeral, SM served something to eat to the boys and Vincenzo's son showed disregard for his grief and very poor table manners, by monopolizing the conversation with grievances against other "picciotti" and "immediate supervisors." A regular "Court Martial" comments Bill.

Joseph is mentioned briefly on the Magaddino tape.

One intriguing angle to Joseph Asaro's period in Montreal pertains to the Bonanno conflict, which broke out while Asaro was living in Canada. Asaro's father sided with Gaspare DiGregorio but the Cotroni-led Montreal crew was sympathetic with Bonanno possibly as late as 1968. Bill Bonanno and Bonanno loyalists like Carlo Simari, Pietro Magaddino, and the DeFilippos were arrested in Canada with Montreal Bonanno member Luigi Greco in 1966, the same year Joseph Asaro and his father Vincenzo were arrested in the raid on Vic Cotroni's mistress's home.

The Montreal *decina* was expected to take a stance in the Bonanno dispute and apparently did but this may have had no practical weight on relationships within Montreal. Luigi Greco, a non-Sicilian nonetheless said to have been influential within the city's Sicilian faction, reportedly refused to visit New York during the dispute after being invited to participate in discussions pertaining to the conflict and the FBI also reported that the New York leadership sent word that Montreal would be contacted once the issue was resolved. Generally speaking, most members remain somewhat passive during internecine warfare and if the Montreal membership's attitude toward Joe Bonanno differed from the majority of the group's New York members it likely had limited impact on relationships internal to the remote Montreal *decina*. The Montreal group also reportedly sent emissaries to the United States later on who requested permission to break off into their own Family in 1968 but this was denied by New Jersey Bonanno leader Joe Zicarelli.



members in Montreal. Reportedly one Greco (possibly Louis Greco), described as a ruling member in the Montreal group, had declined to come to the United States and participate in the Bonanno "family" discussions then in progress. The Montreal group wanted to be left alone. Information was received which indicated that instructions had been sent to "Vic" (Cotroni), the leader of the Montreal group, that the members then in charge of the Bonanno "family" in New York, following the removal of Joseph Bonanno as "boss", were willing to allow the Montreal branch of the "family" to have a free hand in the administration of its own group and that the Montreal group would be notified when the leadership of the Bonanno "family" had been resolved.

Montreal was aloof from the daily concerns of the Bonanno conflict.

A conversation on Sam DeCavalcante's own FBI office bug earlier on during the conflict indicated that the DiGregorio faction leadership was considering placing the Montreal membership under Paul Sciacca. Sciacca was previously a member of the Galante crew and thus had a shared history with the *decina* although unlike many other former crew members he sided with Gaspare DiGregorio. FBI reports from the era also indicate the Montreal crew was temporarily placed under Stefano Magaddino's authority in Buffalo, similar to members like Mike Sabella and Willie Dara receiving protection from Paul Vario and the Lucchese Family. It's evident from various accounts from the 1960s that the new leadership in the Bonanno Family had difficulty monitoring the crew due to its remote and secretive nature, a trend that continued in later decades.

Much as Girolamo Asaro was brought to New York in the early 1900s through the Castellammarese mafia network and may have gone to Boston through similar Trapanese connections, Joseph Asaro also chose to hide in Montreal, a location within the Bonanno network. He was not simply hiding out in a random foreign location but chose a city where the Family had a substantial presence and there he was able to ingratiate himself with the Bonanno Montreal faction, his brother-in-law Mickey Zaffarano then maintaining these ties on behalf of the New York leadership.

Mickey Zaffarano & the Bonanno War

Mickey Zaffarano (b. 1923) married Vincenzo Asaro's daughter Rosalie in 1956. Rosalie was named for Vincenzo's mother Rosalia, Girolamo's wife who died alongside him in the 1912 house fire. Mickey and Rosalie separated shortly after marrying but reconciled around a year later and remained together as Mickey's stature grew in Cosa Nostra.

Zaffarano was born near Prospect Park and lived in Dyker Heights, Park Slope, and Bensonhurst, then eventually moved closer to the Asaros in East New York but had a significant business presence in Manhattan. His membership and core association with the mafia may have come through the Asaros although Zaffarano was well-connected to other New York mafia figures and would prove himself as a Bonanno power independent of his in-laws. Interestingly, Zaffarano's heritage was in Apulia and Molise, not Castellammare nor even Sicily.

Zaffarano represented further Americanization of the Asaro clan.

After a period with the Army Reserves during World War II, Zaffarano received an armed robbery charge in 1947 that sent him to Sing Sing for a term of three-and-a-half to seven years but he served only two, his release coming in 1949. In 1952 he invested in a parking lot owned by associate Umberto "Al" Atruda, who would prove to be a fixture in Zaffarano's circle into the 1980s that continued under the younger Asaros. A self-professed "hoodlum", Mickey Zaffarano then experienced a string of legal issues beginning in the late 1950s. Most notably, he was charged with possessing burglarly tools and stolen property in 1958 with a group that included Gambino member Pasquale Barranca and Lucchese member Salvatore DiPietro, then the following year he was accused of making false statements to federal authorities and transporting stolen securities. Despite Barranca and his brothers joining the Gambino Family, his father Stefano Barranca was a Bonanno member originally from Villarosa in Enna province.

The latter case was the result of an armed robbery in which a clerk at Idlewild airport was held hostage by Zaffarano, Salvatore DiPietro, Vincent Potenza, and future Bonanno member Anthony Bonacci, the group getting away with stolen traveler's checks. The case also connected to Detroit and San Francisco, Zaffarano traveling to both cities with the stolen checks before being arrested in California.

Ultimately convicted of the charges, this case sent him to federal penitentiaries in Atlanta and Washington State. Zaffarano's associate Vincent Potenza, known as "Jimmy Jones", was a confirmed Cosa Nostra member from Manhattan but is alternately carried as both a Lucchese and Genovese member in different reports. Given the close association and shared roots of these two Families in Manhattan and the Bronx it isn't uncommon to see confusion over the affiliation of a given Lucchese or Genovese member in those boroughs. Regardless, he was among Zaffarano's closest and most enduring mafia associates.

Potenza closely associated with both the Lucchese & Genovese groups.

Zaffarano was indicted the following year on charges of robbery, assault, kidnapping, burglary, and buying and receiving stolen property, then convicted in 1961 though he received a suspended sentence, Zaffarano already serving time for the stolen securities charge. Some of these charges may have stemmed from the same case or criminal operation. Zaffarano was released in 1962 pending appeal and opened a garment factory but he was sent back to prison in December 1964 before being hit again with stolen securities charges in early 1965. Though he was projected for release in 1968 at the earliest, Zaffarano was paroled during the summer of 1966.

Mickey Zaffarano was a made member by the 1950s and like his in-laws he is believed to have ultimately sided with the Commission-sponsored DiGregorio faction when Joe Bonanno was deposed in late 1964 but his name was linked to various rumors during the early stages of the dispute. Zaffarano's name first became prominent during Bonanno's October 1964 "kidnapping", widely believed to have been staged by Bonanno himself, where some reports identified the burly Zaffarano as one of the large men who accosted and kidnapped Bonanno outside of a New York courthouse. One FBI source even believed Zaffarano ostensibly aligned himself with Bonanno and helped carry out the kidnapping in secret, this source stating that Zaffarano was often seen in Bonanno's presence and that Zaffarano, Angelo "Moe" Presinzano, Angelo Caruso, and Michael Consolo were seen dining with Bill Bonanno the day prior.

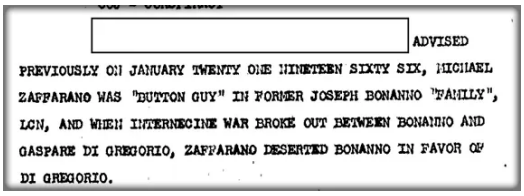
Zaffarano told authorities he had been on a flight to San Francisco at the time of the kidnapping and as proof cited a story about the flight having to make an emergency landing in Ohio due to a sick passenger. Though they couldn't obtain a passenger list, the FBI was able to determine that a flight to San Francisco indeed had to land in Ohio due to a sick passenger during the late night and early morning hours of October 20/21, adding weight to Zaffarano's

account of being out of state when the Bonanno kidnapping occured the following day.

Rumors linked Zaffarano to Bonanno's (pictured) kidnapping.

The totality of evidence suggests the pro-Bonanno faction orchestrated the event despite Joe Bonanno's dramatic telling of the kidnapping affair in his memoir. Bonanno attributed the plot to cousin Stefano Magaddino, naming Magaddino's relatives as the men who abducted him and brought him to a farmhouse near Buffalo where he was interrogated by Magaddino for an extended duration. Recordings of Stefano Magaddino on the day of the Bonanno kidnapping as well as in the days before and after give no indication Magaddino was involved. Magaddino spoke freely on his FBI bug about all kinds of Cosa Nostra matters better kept secret and subsequent tapes make it clear Stefano didn't know Bonanno's whereabouts in the months after the kidnapping. There is also no evidence that the DiGregorio faction kidnapped Bonanno, which would conflict with Bonanno's story anyway and thus can be ruled out. Various rumors placed Bonanno in Canada, other parts of the United States, Sicily, and other foreign locations during his disappearance.

In the ocean of rumor and innuendo surrounding the Bonanno conflict it can be difficult to parse fantasy from reality. One FBI source who was personally acquainted with Mickey Zaffarano told agents that Zaffarano implied involvement in the kidnapping during a conversation between the two men. Another informant linked Mickey Zaffarano to the kidnapping but also believed it was "staged" by Bonanno who offered Zaffarano part of a trucking business in exchange for his assistance with the ruse. Yet another FBI source believed Mickey Zaffarano had broken off from the pro-Bonanno faction resulting in a murder contract on Zaffarano but stated the planned hit was likely aborted due to Zaffarano's incarceration. It's difficult to ascertain from the report whether the alleged contract came from the Bonanno or DiGregorio faction or whether there was any substance to the claim given the swirling chaos and confusion of the Bonanno conflict. Another source similarly stated that Zaffarano had been with Bonanno but later moved to the DiGregorio group.



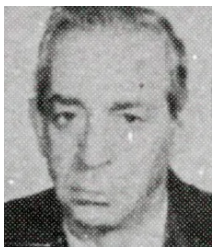
[redacted] ADVISED

PREVIOUSLY ON JANUARY TWENTY ONE NINETEEN SIXTY SIX, MICHAEL ZAFFARANO WAS "BUTTON GUY" IN FORMER JOSEPH BONANNO "FAMILY", LCN, AND WHEN INTERNECINE WAR BROKE OUT BETWEEN BONANNO AND GASPARE DI GREGORIO, ZAFFARANO DESERTED BONANNO IN FAVOR OF DI GREGORIO.

Zaffarano's loyalties produced conflicting accounts.

His legal trouble in the mid-1960s likely removed Mickey Zaffarano from the practical realities of the Bonanno conflict although as a Bonanno member he was still beholden to the politics at play. One source familiar with Zaffarano stated that Zaffarano had previously been under Carmine Galante, an incarcerated former Bonanno *capodecina* whose crew largely sided with Joe Bonanno during the early stages of the "war", then placed Zaffarano under Galante's successor Joe Notaro. Notaro was a key Bonanno loyalist with heritage in Cerda, Palermo, and interestingly many supporters of Joe Bonanno were non-Castellammarese and even non-Sicilian, the self-professed Sicilian-centric mafia traditionalist Bonanno instead retaining a relatively Americanized group whereas most of the Castellammarese members sided with their other *compaesano* Gaspare DiGregorio.

Adding to Zaffarano's placement with the Galante crew is that Carmine Galante's alleged cousin Moe Presinzano witnessed the Zaffarano-Asaro marriage in 1956. Presinzano was not Castellammarese, his heritage coming from Resuttano, Caltanissetta, but he was part of the cutthroat Lower East Side element recruited by Carmine Galante and belonged to Galante's inner circle. Joe Notaro died of a heart attack in 1966 and in addition to various captains losing their rank during the conflict, the Galante-Notaro crew appears to have split in multiple directions during the 1960s, Montreal gaining autonomy as its own *decina* years earlier and other former members of the crew in New York and New Jersey serving as captains at various points beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing into the '70s.



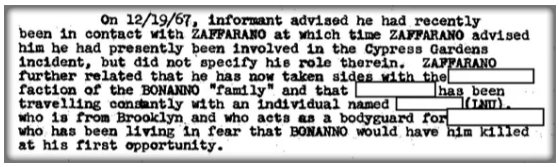
Presinzano (pictured) was a close friend of Zaffarano.

Zaffarano partnered with Jimmy Potenza in the Lucille Sales Corporation in 1967 and that same year an FBI informant reported that Zaffarano was considering getting into the narcotics business. He was said to be distributing

porn on a “retail level” and in 1967 his office on Broadway was raided by police, leading to the arrest of Zaffarano and several associates for possession of pornography with intent to sell. The bust did little to deter Zaffarano as months later he made a trip to Los Angeles and was reportedly considering a move to the area, investigators learning he was purchasing film-making equipment in California. Law enforcement suspected the film equipment had been stolen in buglaries. Future Bonanno members Anthony Bonacci and Pasquale Cosoleto were reportedly committing burglaries in the area and both men were close associates of Zaffarano back in New York. Investigation into Zaffarano during this period confirmed he was a major porn distributor and involved in various aspects of the industry, reportedly running a film processing plant in Brooklyn.

One report places Mickey Zaffarano near the front lines of the Bonanno conflict in late 1967. That December, an FBI informant claimed to have been told by Zaffarano himself that he was a participant in the infamous Cypress Gardens triple murder of Thomas “Smitty” D’Angelo, his brother James, and their associate Frank Telleri the previous month. Smitty D’Angelo was a Bonanno *capodecina* who was reportedly elected *consigliere* shortly before his murder and the D’Angelo brothers interestingly had heritage in Partanna, Smitty yet another Bonanno leader whose family descended from the area around Salemi and Santa Ninfa.

Earlier in the conflict a source noted that D’Angelo’s loyalties were unclear. Formerly a close associate of Joe Bonanno’s underboss John Morale, Vito Bonventre’s son-in-law and therefore another Asaro marital relative, D’Angelo gained increased stature after joining the DiGregorio faction. The Bonanno Family was a splintering political quagmire during the late stages of the Bonanno war and though the Joe Bonanno faction is generally believed to have ordered the triple murder, several names have surfaced as possible participants in the Cypress Gardens murders.


On 12/19/67, informant advised he had recently been in contact with ZAFFARANO at which time ZAFFARANO advised him he had presently been involved in the Cypress Gardens incident, but did not specify his role therein. ZAFFARANO further related that he has now taken sides with the [redacted] faction of the BONANNO "family" and that [redacted] has been travelling constantly with an individual named [redacted] (LNU), who is from Brooklyn and who acts as a bodyguard for [redacted] who has been living in fear that BONANNO would have him killed at his first opportunity.

Zaffarano was part of the rumors surrounding the Cyprus Gardens hit.

Joe Bonanno’s cousin Gaspare Magaddino, the former Castellammare Family boss, was living in New York at this time and linked to the scene of the Cypress Gardens massacre, too. Police sought Magaddino for questioning soon after the incident but he was never charged. Both Gaspare and his brother Pietro were loyalists of Joe Bonanno so if indeed Gaspare played a

role it would have been on Bonanno's behalf. Gaspare Magaddino was previously a suspect in the 1961 murder of a *compaesano* named Alberto Galante in Brooklyn so it's not out of the question that Gaspare was involved in violent activities if indeed the Bonanno faction was responsible. Police determined that the same gun used in the Cypress Gardens massacre was the weapon used in a 1966 attempt on DiGregorio loyalist Frank Mari, another former Galante crew member, further pointing the blame toward Bonanno.

Other names rumored to be connected to the murders point to different factions. The Family's official leadership had shifted from Gaspare DiGregorio to *consigliere* Paul Sciacca and a group of aggressive rising stars led by Mari. Referring to Cypress Gardens decades later, Vito Grimaldi once implied to Frank Fiordilino that Frank's uncle Giovanni Fiordilino was one of the killers. Giovanni Fiordilino arrived to New York from Castellammare in the late 1950s and had risen in the Family under DiGregorio's leadership, being elevated to captain sometime in the mid-late 1960s. While Fiordilino and Magaddino ostensibly belonged to different factions, they were both immigrant mafiosi with roots in the Castellammare Family. Luigi Ronsisvalle, a low-level Sicilian heroin trafficker in the 1970s, was told by associates in Bushwick that Joe Bonanno received assistance from immigrant Sicilian mafiosi who came to New York from Castellammare during the war, too, though Fiordilino was not mentioned.

If Zaffarano was involved in the Cypress Gardens massacre, that would place an American member in the conspiracy and presumably bend the blame back toward the official leadership under DiGregorio-Sciacca rather than Bonanno but Zaffarano's history with the Galante crowd also raises doubts as to where his loyalties truly rested. As with the Bonanno "kidnapping", rumors proliferated about the Cypress Gardens hit and without corroborating evidence it's difficult to invest in the Zaffarano theory even though he was named in connection with at least two of the more volatile events of the war, the 1964 Bonanno kidnapping and 1967 Cypress Gardens. Another former Galante *decina* member, Michael Consolo, rose in power as the war unfolded, Consolo becoming a *capodecina* before his murder in April 1968. Consolo's murder however is firmly attributed to the DiGregorio-Sciacca group, Consolo suspected of double-dealing with the Bonanno faction.

Consolo was accused of conflicting loyalties during the war.

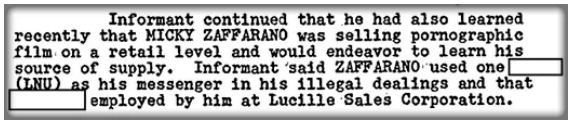
Zaffarano accumulated arrests for transporting stolen properties in 1968 and yet again for stolen securities in 1969. Paul Sciacca was by then the official boss though Sciacca's underboss Frank Mari attempted a coup to take over the Bonanno Family in late 1969 and disappeared along with fellow Family leader Michael Adamo, the organization in another state of flux. Mari was Calabrian and the children of Mari and Sciacca intermarried during the Bonanno conflict but contemporary reports indicate the underboss had essentially declared himself boss. Adamo descended from Vita and was an alleged cousin of Settimo Accardi of the Lucchese Family in Newark, Vincenzo Morsellino from nearby Calatafimi being another confirmed Accardi relative in the Bonanno Family.

Mari and Adamo were reportedly driven to what they believed would be a Commission meeting by Castellammarese Bonanno member Frank Bonomo where the two leaders were murdered and secretly disposed of, one informant naming proposed member Alphonse "Sonny Red" Indelicato as a participant. Indelicato at that time was "on record" with Philip Rastelli and an FBI informant stated several years later that although Indelicato was not yet made, he was treated with the respect afforded to a made member. One source believed Rastelli was already the Family underboss but a series of acting leaders, including Rastelli, helped direct the Family for a period until November of 1969 when the FBI received word that Natale Evola from Castellammare del Golfo had been elected boss with Rastelli as his underboss and the Castellammarese Joseph DiFilippi serving as *consigliere*.

Zaffarano's Role in the Post-War Bonanno Family

Mickey Zaffarano was sent back to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta during the late 1960s where he was visited by father-in-law Vincenzo Asaro multiple times in 1969 and received a visit from the wife of Genovese member Vincent Potenza, Zaffarano's longtime associate and business partner. Zaffarano was released in early 1970 and by then lived in Wantagh, Long Island. He was involved in an extensive partnership with the Peraino brothers of the Colombo Family in various pornography activities and the men were planning to reopen a film-processing plant for Zaffarano in New York. The Perainos'

father Giuseppe was a suspected leader in the Colombo Family who became a dominant force in Brooklyn during the 1920s then was murdered in 1930, Giuseppe Peraino coming from Palermo originally. Like Zaffarano, the younger Perainos are primarily known for their pornographic interests.


Informant continued that he had also learned recently that MICKY ZAFFARANO was selling pornographic film on a retail level and would endeavor to learn his source of supply. Informant said ZAFFARANO used one [redacted] (LNU) as his messenger in his illegal dealings and that [redacted] employed by him at Lucille Sales Corporation.

Zaffarano was a large-scale pornography distributor.

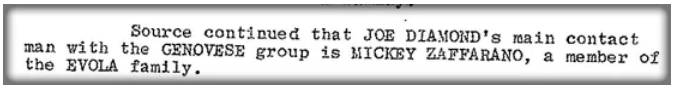
New England associate Michael Caruana, a confidant of the Patriarcas, also planned to meet with Zaffarano in 1970 but the rendezvous was aborted due to an injury Caruana had suffered. The planned meeting ostensibly involved a legitimate business transaction but Caruana was primarily known as a drug kingpin. Caruano was eventually made into the New England Family but disappeared in the 1980s, "Unsolved Mysteries" even covering the Caruana story; some former affiliates of the New England Family claimed Caruana was murdered. Zaffarano also made phone calls to Boston in early 1971 to an unspecified number, showing other ties to New England.

In July 1971, an FBI informant met with Zaffarano who told him the Bonanno Family had been "accepted" back into Cosa Nostra by the "*Commissione*" and the Family was then being run by a three-man panel, the members no longer "outcasts". Zaffarano told the same informant he was spending considerable time in Los Angeles and representing the pornography interests of Joe Colombo who was urging Zaffarano to expand his distribution between New York and LA, Zaffarano commenting that Colombo's request had to be approved by his Bonanno superiors. As the Peraino brothers' superior, it is logical that Colombo was aware of their pornography interests with Zaffarano. The partnership with the Perainos continued even after Joe Colombo's shooting that year and Zaffarano utilized associate Joseph Mascolo to help direct many of his porn interests. Joe Colombo's father was a Calabrian born in Brazil who associated with the early Colombo Family before his 1938 murder but Colombo's mother was Sicilian.

Colombo reportedly took an interest in Zaffarano's porn empire.

A source reported in early 1972 that Zaffarano was boss Natale Evola's point of contact with the Genovese Family and suggested Zaffarano was again engaging in his longtime trade of stolen securities. Unlike his father-in-law and brothers-in-law the Asaros, Zaffarano's close association with Manhattan-based Genovese and Lucchese affiliates no doubt faciliated his liaison role under Evola. He made several phone calls during this period to an ex-con in the greater Boston area named Rudy LiMauro who later that year testified against affiliates of the Tampa Family in a Florida drug trafficking case. LiMauro's brother lived in Lynn, the same town Jerry Asaro's early associate Giuseppe Carcione once lived in.

It's not clear how Zaffarano knew LiMauro but LiMauro was said to have ties to a number of New York figures. Along with Jerry Asaro's association with former Boston resident Giuseppe Carcione in a 1936 bootlegging operation, it's interesting that Mickey Zaffarano had multiple contacts with Boston figures during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Even if these communications were via Zaffarano's extensive criminal and business interests alone, the extended Asaro clan did maintain connections to Boston by coincidence. His prior contact with Michael Caruana and his alleged role as a messenger to the Genovese Family, the Patriarca Family's representative on the Commission, could indicate he was the Bonanno Family's point of contact with the New England Family although there was little known contact between the two Families during the post-1950s era.


Source continued that JOE DIAMOND's main contact man with the GENOVESE group is MICKEY ZAFFARANO, a member of the EVOLA family.

Zaffarano may have served as Evola's liaison to other Families.

Mickey Zaffarano's Montreal visit occurred in September 1972, Zaffarano representing the Bonanno leadership in the dispute between *capodecina* Vic Cotroni, his acting captain Paolo Violi, and rogue soldier Nicolo Rizzuto, this event touched on in the section on Joseph Asaro. Rizzuto was the son-in-law of a former Cattolica Eraclea boss and deeply tied to the Sicilian mafia, likely having been initiated there prior to transferring into the Bonanno Family. He would also bring some of his immediate relatives into the Bonanno Family in Montreal later on. In addition to *capodecina* Nicolo Alfano, who previously headed a Family leadership panel during the early stages of the 1960s Bonanno war, Jersey City-based Bonanno member Nicolo "Nick" Buttafuoco traveled to Montreal during the conflict and was greeted along with Alfano by suspected Montreal Bonanno member Calogero Renda, Rizzuto's uncle. Both Buttafuoco and Renda were *compaesani* of the Rizzutos from Cattolica Eraclea while Alfano was from Racalmuto, another Agrigento *comune*. Buttafuoco and

Alfano had a longstanding relationship with the Rizzuto-Renda clan of Montreal as well as the Arcuris of Montreal. Domenico Arcuri was another likely Bonanno member in Montreal and he too came from Cattolica Eraclea, his sons remaining affiliated with the crew decades later.

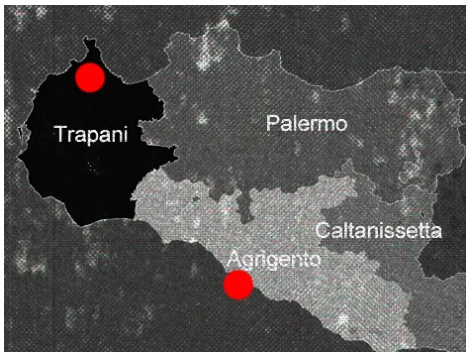
Suspected Montreal Bonanno member Calogero Renda and his brother-in-law Vito Rizzuto, Nicolo's father, previously lived in the Bronx area during the 1930s where Domenico Arcuri's relative Rosario Arcuri was suspected in Rizzuto's 1933 murder. One of Rosario Arcuri's close compatriots was in turn his *compaesano* Giovanni Guaragna, the father of future Bronx-based Bonanno member Emanuele "Manny" Guaragna. Nicolo Alfano and his crew had an enduring presence in Westchester County that included connections to these Cattolicensi. Later "Montreal" *capodecina* Gerlando "George" Sciascia from Cattolica Eraclea also lived in the Bronx until his 1999 murder and one of the few New York-based Bonanno members under Sciascia was Giuseppe Arcuri, a relative of the Montreal Arcuris. Nicolo Rizzuto also spent time staying with Alfano *decina* member Nick Buttafuoco prior to Rizzuto's residence in Canada. If indeed the Bonanno Family had members in Montreal prior to Carmine Galante's 1950s efforts, perhaps they were remote members under Alfano, who was also close to Racalmutese members in the Buffalo Family's Ontario group.

Alfano (L) & Buttafuoco (R) were greeted in Canada by Renda (center).

This circle of Agrigentino mafiosi affiliating themselves with the Bonanno Family early on in New York and New Jersey shows that their involvement with the otherwise Trapanese-centric Bonanno Family was not just a happenstance occurrence unique to Montreal but an ongoing pattern of affiliation in multiple locations. Outside of the Alfano and Montreal crews, the Bonannos had another crew of well-connected Agrigentini in New Jersey and Manhattan under Joseph Colletti, the brother-in-law of former underboss Angelo Caruso from Leonforte, Enna, and first cousin of Colorado boss Vincenzo "Jim" Colletti, Jim Colletti being a suspected member of the Bonanno Family before moving to the Pueblo area. The Collettis were from Lucca Sicula

and had other Agrigentino members in their crew, some like future captain Angelo Salvo and his nephew Antonino Busciglia being tied to the mafia in Alessandria della Rocca.

Well-known Bonanno names like Mike Sabella (Sciacca), Phil Giaccone (Santa Margherita di Belice), the Indelicatos (Sciacca), Salvatore Ferrugia (Montaperto), and various other obscure members were Agrigentino as well. The early American mafia's Agrigentino statesman Nicola Gentile from Siculiana, who traveled to Montreal in the 1910s, transferred into the Bonanno Family under Nicolo Schiro for a time in the early 1920s but offered no commentary on what, if any, Agrigentino element existed in the Family then and his transfer was a highly circumstantial and temporary political maneuver. As is the case with virtually all Agrigentino factions in the American mafia, there is an added secrecy among the Bonanno Agrigento element that clouds their history but nonetheless suggests a deeper set of relationships tying them to the organization over multiple generations.



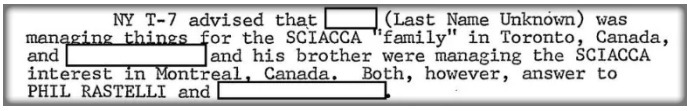
Mafiosi from coastal Agrigento joined the primarily Trapanese Bonannos.

That Mickey Zaffarano, Nicolo Alfano, and Nicolo Buttafuoco were all sent to Montreal to arbitrate the Violi-Rizzuto dispute is not random. Much as mafiosi don't typically move to an area without existing personal or underworld connections there, this is generally true for traveling representatives or messengers as well. Alfano and Buttafuoco's enduring ties to the Montreal Cattolicensi are demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs but Zaffarano's brother-in-law Joseph Asaro lived in Montreal until just six years previous where he was a member of the local *decina* and close to the crew's leadership.

Zaffarano's one-time membership in the Carmine Galante *decina* was also relevant to his presence in Montreal given the Montreal-based members previously belonged to this *decina* before receiving recognition as their own crew in the 1960s. According to the January 1965 Magaddino tape, Galante successor Joe Notaro traveled to Montreal in the early 1960s where he may have presided over the unsanctioned induction of Montreal members. Alleged

Galante cousin Salvatore Giglio also spent time living in Montreal during the 1950s where he helped direct the crew's operations. Unlike alleged Galante "cousins" the Presinzanos, Giglio was at least Castellammarese like Galante.

Other Galante crew members like Vito DeFilippo and his son Patrick maintained a presence in Quebec and Ontario, the two of them arrested with Bill Bonanno during a 1966 Montreal visit. Vito DeFilippo associated closely with Buffalo member Paul Volpe in Toronto, too. Future boss Philip Rastelli spent a period on the lam in Montreal during the Bonanno war, Rastelli yet another alumnus of the old Galante crew. Rastelli was the Family underboss at the time Mickey Zaffarano visited Canada in 1972 and a contemporary FBI report identifies Rastelli as the Family's liaison with Canada.

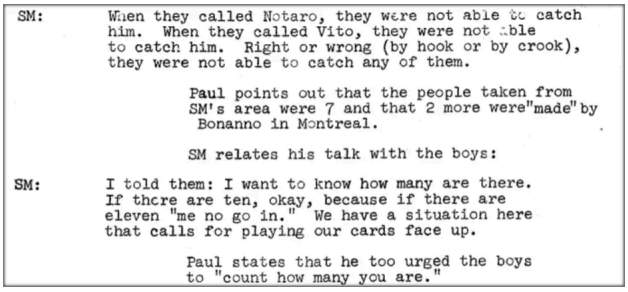

NY T-7 advised that [redacted] (Last Name Unknown) was managing things for the SCIACCA "family" in Toronto, Canada, and [redacted] and his brother were managing the SCIACCA interest in Montreal, Canada. Both, however, answer to PHIL RASTELLI and [redacted]

One source stated that Canadian members reported to underboss Rastelli.

It's evident on the January 1965 FBI tape of Stefano Magaddino meeting with visiting Bonanno leaders that Magaddino was disturbed by the ongoing involvement of former Galante crew members in Montreal like Joe Notaro and Vito DeFilippo. He saw Joe Bonanno's presence in Montreal as a threat to Magaddino's own Canadian interests and although he confirms that he approved Bonanno's induction of ten total members in Montreal (a literal "*decina*"), Bonanno's recruitment of additional members upset him and some of these recruits were, in Magaddino's view, poached from Buffalo. Magaddino added that he'd be upset even if there were only eleven members in Montreal as this was still more than the approved ten.

Paolo Violi was likely one of the men he was referring to based on his history in Hamilton and relation to Buffalo affiliates there although Paul Sciacca made a comment indicating that the Bonanno Family inducted seven men from Magaddino's "area" and an additional two in Montreal, making for a total of nine members inducted without Commission approval. This number complements various claims that the Montreal *decina* maintained roughly twenty members in subsequent years, ten of them originally unsanctioned but seemingly grandfathered in over time. Future underboss Sal Vitale traveled to Montreal in later decades and he claimed during his cooperation that the New York leadership was surprised to find out the Montreal crew had around twenty members as they expected them to have ten, showing that the Bonanno Family was not entirely in the loop on the formal arrangements up north.

The 1972 FBI report that later identified Rastelli as an overseer of the Family's Canadian interests lists a redacted individual as the "Sciacca" (Bonanno) organization's manager within Ontario itself along with two redacted brothers carrying out the same duties in Montreal, the latter no doubt Vic and Frank Cotroni, adding weight to the idea that the Bonanno Family once initiated members in Ontario, these names never confirmed to date. A redacted name listed alongside Rastelli as another top overseer of these overall interests is unredacted in another report, this man being *capodecina* and future underboss Nicky Marangello. On the January 1965 Magaddino recording, the men also discuss the overall size of the Bonanno Family at that time and Paul Sciacca states that the group has a total of around 180 members, this number presumably not including the unsanctioned members made by Bonanno in Canada, California, and Arizona.



SM: When they called Notaro, they were not able to catch him. When they called Vito, they were not able to catch him. Right or wrong (by hook or by crook), they were not able to catch any of them.

Paul points out that the people taken from SM's area were 7 and that 2 more were "made" by Bonanno in Montreal.

SM relates his talk with the boys:

SM: I told them: I want to know how many are there. If there are ten, okay, because if there are eleven "me no go in." We have a situation here that calls for playing our cards face up.

Paul states that he too urged the boys to "count how many you are."

The induction of additional Bonanno soldiers in Canada was controversial.

Additionally, the "books" had been closed for approximately seven years at this time and a number of members had died without replacement. LCNBios identified at least seven confirmed members who died during that period and there were likely more "old timers" and "sleepers" who passed during that window, easily placing the Family at around 200 "official" members when the organization was closed off to new members, the Five Families confirmed by countless member sources to have had "caps" limiting their size although these numbers varied by Family. Joe Bonanno himself stated his Family had around 300 members at its peak under his reign. Despite his credentials, this may be an exaggeration as other sources place the Genovese and Gambino Families around that number and most sources indicate the Bonanno Family was considerably smaller despite outsizing the Colombos and Luccheses. Sciacca's estimate of 180 members in 1965 has a ring of truth based on the totality of information available on the Bonanno Family although it can't be entirely discounted that the group was once larger.

Returning to Zaffarano, multiple meetings were held during the 1972 Montreal trip where various matters were discussed, culminating in a formal gathering where the Cotroni-Violi leadership presented their case against Nicolo

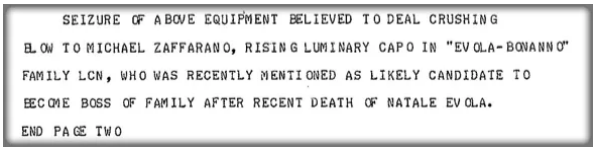
Rizzuto. Rizzuto was accused of failing to report to the Montreal leaders about his activities and whereabouts, Cotroni seeking permission to expel Rizzuto from the crew. The New York Bonanno representatives discouraged any escalation of the conflict but seemingly declined to issue a formal ruling, Zaffarano telling Violi that if Rizzuto didn't get himself in line he'd have to answer to the administration in New York. Montreal also requested permission from Zaffarano to induct new members in Montreal during this time but the request was denied, drawing back to the closing of the "books" in 1958 which were still several years away from being reopened.

In March of the following year, a Los Angeles FBI source identified Mickey Zaffarano as a *capodecina* in the "Evola" Family who represented the interests of the New York mafia in Los Angeles where Zaffarano engaged in both pornogaphy distribution and shylocking, noting Zaffarano was connected to the Gambino Family's interests in the area. Zaffarano had previously been linked to an associate of former Gambino captain Carmine Lombardozzi in California. He served thirty days for contempt later that year for refusing to answer a grand jury's questions about the Brooklyn murder of Carlo Lombardi by Bonanno-linked killers Nicholas Musolino and Peter Salanardi. Lombardi reportedly confronted several mafia figures with a submachine gun prior to his murder, including Gambino underboss Neil Dellacroce, and fired shots at Dellacroce's Ravenite Social Club.

Musolino was a low-level enforcer with ties to Zaffarano.

Zaffarano attended the September 1973 funeral for Bonanno *rappresentante* Natale Evola who died in late August. Fellow Asaro in-law Vito Bonventre attended, as did many Family leaders. Just days later a law enforcement raid seized equipment from Zaffarano's pornography operations, describing him as a rising captain in the Family and a candidate to replace Evola as boss. In addition to his pornography interests and real estate properties, Zaffarano owned part of associate Al Altruda's restaurant Captain Al's but later sold it. His pornography interests extended to Pittsburgh and West Virginia by this

time and he maintained contact with Patrick DeFilippo in Las Vegas, whose father Vito had been a Galante protege and key Bonanno loyalist during the 1960s conflict before being exiled to the West Coast. One report indicates Patrick was one of the unsanctioned members brought into the Family by Joe Bonanno in the 1960s.


SEIZURE OF ABOVE EQUIPMENT BELIEVED TO DEAL CRUSHING
BLOW TO MICHAEL ZAFFARANO, RISING LUMINARY CAPO IN "EVOLA-BONANNO"
FAMILY LCN, WHO WAS RECENTLY MENTIONED AS LIKELY CANDIDATE TO
BECOME BOSS OF FAMILY AFTER RECENT DEATH OF NATALE EVOLA.
END PAGE TWO

Zaffarano was mentioned as a possible post-Evola Bonanno boss.

Mickey Zaffarano was observed frequenting the Italian-American Veterans Club in Brooklyn along with Philip Rastelli, Evola's underboss, and Nicholas Marangello, who became Family *consigliere* following the death of Joseph DiFilippi the year prior. Like Zaffarano, both Rastelli and Marangello were former members of the Carmine Galante *decina*. Zaffarano was also running card games out of a social club in Bath Beach. The card game attracted "50 or 60 made guys" and players included Lucchese member Charles DiPalermo, Colombo members Gaetano "Tommy" Amato and Alphonse Persico, as well as Genovese member Charles "Chuckie" Tuzzo. Persico became the Colombo *consigliere* that year and Tuzzo was eventually identified as a captain in the Genovese Family. DiPalermo was from the Lucchese's Prince Street crew where he and his brothers supervised large-scale heroin operations and his brother Joe DiPalermo was one of Carmine Galante's closest friends spanning decades.

Plans to move to Los Angeles full-time were curtailed due to Zaffarano's ongoing legal troubles, his porn operations under constant scrutiny and Zaffarano's stature in the Bonanno Family bringing additional law enforcement pressure. In addition to his own affairs, Zaffarano was reportedly looking after the California interests of Gambino captain Ettore Zappi, a Campanian close to Carlo Gambino. The Bonanno Family elected Phil Rastelli as their new boss in late 1973 and he was confirmed in his new role by February of 1974 but Carmine Galante's release from prison during this period opened up new variables in the Bonanno landscape. Contemporary informants were already reporting that Carmine Galante would usurp control of the Family.

The Return of Carmine Galante

A meeting of approximately fifteen members was held in February 1974, attended by Mickey Zaffarano, Carmine Galante, Genovese leader Frank

“Funzi” Tieri and members of other New York Families to discuss concerns over Galante’s intent to take over the Bonanno group. Galante was also seen attending card games at Zaffarano’s Bath Beach club. Future Bonanno members Anthony Spero and Pasquale Cosoleto assisted in running the game and Gambino captain Salvatore “Little Toddo” Aurello was a reputed partner. In April of 1974, Zaffarano was seen visiting Carlo Gambino’s residence on the same day that Gambino captain James “Jimmy Brown” Failla had taken Gambino to visit Funzi Tieri in the hospital. Failla and Gambino member Santo Patti were surveilled at the Gambino home on the same occasion.

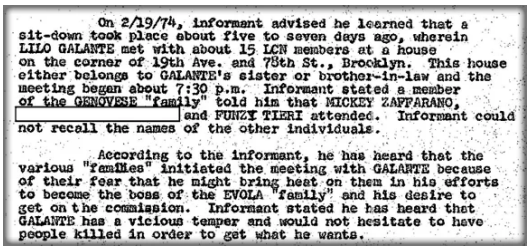
Paolo Violi visited New York in May of 1974 and met with Philip Rastelli, Nicky Marangello, and Giuseppe Buccellato in the Bronx. Montreal prevously sent Paolo Violi to New York the previous November to participate in Rastelli’s election. With Rastelli crowned as boss, Marangello stepped into the underboss role while some sources indicate Giuseppe Buccellato was an interim *consigliere* before Stefano Cannone assumed the title. Rastelli was the first official Bonanno boss who was not only non-Trapanese but also non-Sicilian and in addition to Rastelli’s Neapolitan heritage, Nicky Marangello’s family origins were in Potenza. Buccellato and Cannone were Castellammarese but the Family’s leadership for the first time reflected full “Americanization”. Cannone’s nephews were members of the Pittston Family where a small but significant Castellammarese element dominated the Family’s membership along New York’s Southern Tier.

Cannone represented the Family’s Castellammarese roots.

Mickey Zaffarano similarly reflected the rise of the Bonanno Family’s Americanized element but unlike Rastelli and Marangello he’d married into one of the enduring Castellammarese clans, giving him some connection to the Family’s deeper history. Zaffarano was already one of the Family’s top captains by the time Rastelli was elected, his lucrative porn enterprise giving him connections and influence across the underbelly of the entire United States and his close relationships to the other New York Families reinforcing his status in the wider New York mafia landscape. Vincenzo Asaro died in 1970,

Joseph Asaro in 1971, and Jerry Asaro's health was beginning to deteriorate in East New York, leaving Zaffarano as the clan's principal figure in the Bonanno Family. The administration was no longer comprised of elder Castellammarese figures but peers of Zaffarano, Rastelli and Marangello being non-Sicilian hoodlums who entered the Family under Carmine Galante as he did.

One contemporary FBI source indicated that Carmine Galante was again a *capodecina* following his release from prison in early 1974 and future underboss Salvatore Vitale, though not a member for another decade, said that Galante was officially a captain as of 1979, at least in the Rastelli faction's eyes. Galante's release not only brought back a veteran Castellammarese leader but one that many members once owed allegiance to. Around the same time Paolo Violi visited Rastelli in May 1974, an informant told the FBI that Mickey Zaffarano had been further "strengthened" by the release of Carmine Galante and the two men quickly resumed their close association. Galante was expected to "confront" Zaffarano's porn partner Tony Peraino of the Colombo Family and chase him out of California due to a dispute between the two mafia porn kingpins, Galante perhaps attempting to curry favor and influence among his old contacts.

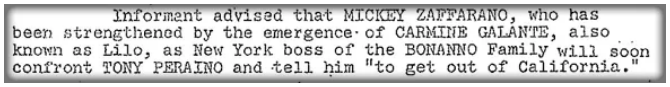


On 2/19/74, informant advised he learned that a sit-down took place about five to seven days ago, wherein LILO GALANTE met with about 15 LCN members at a house on the corner of 19th Ave. and 78th St., Brooklyn. This house either belongs to GALANTE's sister or brother-in-law and the meeting began about 7:30 p.m. Informant stated a member of the GENOVESE "family" told him that MICKEY ZAFFARANO, [redacted] and FUNZY TIERI attended. Informant could not recall the names of the other individuals.

According to the informant, he has heard that the various "families" initiated the meeting with GALANTE because of their fear that he might bring heat on them in his efforts to become the boss of the EVOLA "family" and his desire to get on the commission. Informant stated he has heard that GALANTE has a vicious temper and would not hesitate to have people killed in order to get what he wants.

Galante's release heavily impacted Zaffarano and the Bonanno Family.

One FBI informant was already referring to Zaffarano as a captain in the "Carmine Galante Family" by spring of 1974. Another source even believed Zaffarano would be reasserting influence in California on behalf of Joe Bonanno, bringing to mind the old rumors about Zaffarano's involvement in the 1964 kidnapping and the ongoing confusion over Zaffarano's loyalties. Despite his problems with Tony Peraino, Zaffarano's porn interests continued to intersect with the Colombo Family, some of his operations connecting to member Anthony LaPonzina and proposed member Joe Gentile in addition to the Perainos. Available reports provide no follow-up on Galante's expected intervention between Zaffarano and the Perainos but Galante's de facto influence in the Bonanno Family after his release was immediate and FBI reports from the mid-1970s often overlooked Rastelli's position in favor of Carmine Galante.


Informant advised that MICKEY ZAFFARANO, who has
been strengthened by the emergence of CARMINE GALANTE, also
known as Lilo, as New York boss of the BONANNO Family will soon
confront TONY PERAINO and tell him "to get out of California."

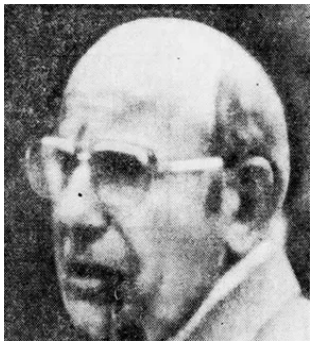
Galante reportedly advocated on Zaffarano's behalf.

Galante is not an uncommon name among Castellammarese mafiosi and their associates but neither is it one of the most dominant names. The name itself is extremely common among the general population of Castellammare, most mafiosi and citizens in general having a relation to someone named Galante somewhere in their family tree. Various members and associates named Galante have surfaced in connection with the Bonanno and Castellammare Families, Galantes even intermarrying with some of the major clans, but it's not clear how they relate to Carmine, if at all. Born Camillo Galante, Carmine's father Vincenzo has never been named as a member nor have any of Carmine's uncles or siblings but he grew up in the Castellammarese colony on the Lower East Side where he proved himself as a street criminal and eventually became a protege of Family leaders Joe Bonanno, Frank Garofalo, and Giovanni Bonventre. While not a known relative of the same kin network, Galante's involvement in the Bonanno Family was still a byproduct of the old Bonanno-Magaddino-Bonventre clan even though he had close relationships to the Americanized "street" element.

Despite erroneous reports of Carmine Galante having been Joe Bonanno's underboss or *consigliere* during the 1950s, he was in fact a *capodecina* until his incarceration in 1959. He was effectively a "street boss" for the administration in that he directly represented Joe Bonanno and had one of the largest crews in the Family but the administration in those years was comprised of Joe Bonanno, underboss Frank Garofalo, and *consigliere* John Tartamella, Garofalo then being succeeded by Vito Bonventre's son-in-law John Morale. Tartamella's controversial successor in 1964 was Joe Bonanno's son Bill although the ensuing Family conflict largely nullified Bill Bonanno's term as *consigliere*. Though Carmine Galante was not part of the administration prior to his incarceration it is still fair to state that he had "de facto" power akin to an underboss or *consigliere* under the leadership of Joe Bonanno, his crew at one time being the size of a small Family.

A supporter of the Bonanno clan status quo, Galante stayed loyal to Bonanno but he watched from prison as the remnants of this faction were forced to fall in with the DiGregorio regime or be cast out from Cosa Nostra. A generally accepted theory is that Carmine Galante, still bitter over the deposition of his mentor Joe Bonanno in the 1960s, sought not only to take over the Family but intended to install former Bonanno loyalists in power and marginalize those he blamed for Bonanno's situation. The FBI was aware of telephone calls

between Galante and Bonanno through the second half of the 1970s and Galante was rumored to have even visited Bonanno during one visit to the West Coast.



Galante (pictured) never completely abandoned Joe Bonanno.

Galante also brought the DeFilippos out from Las Vegas, reinstalling them as active members in New York by 1976. In addition to many of the Family leaders in the late 1960s and '70s having roots in Galante's crew, Galante had a terrifying reputation and aggressive nature that by all accounts unsettled virtually everyone in the New York mafia. Galante's mere presence on the streets of New York caused a power shift and Mickey Zaffarano is frequently mentioned in connection with FBI coverage of Galante's initial activities after his release in 1974.

Phil Rastelli experienced legal trouble early on after becoming boss and in 1976 began serving a prison term for hijacking. With Galante already gaining momentum, Rastelli's incarceration accelerated Galante's goal of consolidating the Family under his own leadership. Vito DeFilippo, now back in the fold, was promoted to captain and other members aligned with Galante saw promotions. Mickey Zaffarano in turn stepped down as captain that year and was replaced by Moe Presinzano, the Galante cohort who witnessed Zaffarano's marriage to Rosalie Asaro twenty years earlier. The Family leadership became increasingly subservient to Galante, including underboss Marangello, and new initiates were pulled into Galante's web of influence through the mid-late '70s. The Bonanno Family had lost their seat on the Commission in late 1964 when Joe Bonanno was removed from power and Carmine Galante was apparently bitter over the organization's loss in status, wanting to reestablish the Family as a formidable entity in New York politics.

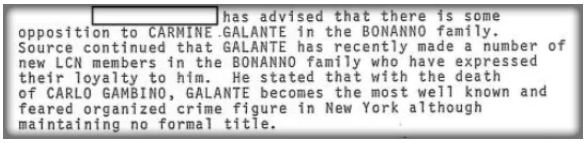
Zaffarano had part of the Presinzano crew returned to him the following year when he regained his previous rank. He attended multiple induction ceremonies in 1977 and along with brother-in-law Jerry Asaro he co-sponsored Jerry's son Vinny into Cosa Nostra that year. In addition to the Asaros, Zaffarano's crew included notable newly-inducted names like

Dominick “Sonny Black” Napolitano, Louis Attanasio, Tony Mirra, James “Jimmy Legs” Episcopia, Tony Rabito, Joseph D’Amico, and Anthony “Bruno” Indelicato. Zaffarano’s old associate Anthony Bonacci, now a member, may have reported to Zaffarano’s crew for a time as well. Napolitano, made famous by the “Donnie Brasco” story unfolding during these years, was non-Sicilian but had a lineage in the Family through his marital uncle John Aquaro, a one-time *capodecina* in Greenpoint. Aquaro is one of the only non-Sicilians known to have been made into the Family prior to 1931 and allegedly carried out a murder during the Castellammarese War.

Napolitano (L) traced his Family lineage to Aquaro (R)

Ostensibly the acting boss in Rastelli’s absence, Galante declared himself official boss of the Bonanno Family around June 1977. Joe Massino was informed at his induction ceremony that month that Galante was now the boss, not Rastelli, the news coming from Galante himself. Contemporary reports, including undercover agent Joe Pistone’s infilitration of the Bonanno Family as “Donnie Brasco”, show a large element of the Family recognized, or at least accepted, Carmine Galante as the boss of the organization. Some of these agreeable members were Galante’s allies and others were likely neutral and hoping to avoid conflict while a minority remained loyal to Rastelli. The Commission never recognized Galante as the official boss but his de facto status was acknowledged throughout the city at the time.

Galante was hit with a parole violation in March of 1978 and served nearly a year in prison, future boss and cooperating witness Joe Massino later testifying that a ruling panel was installed in Galante’s absence consisting of Mickey Zaffarano, underboss Nicky Marangello, and *consigliere* Stefano Cannone. A contemporary FBI report states that by late 1978 the panel consisted of Zaffarano, captain Phil Giaccone, and Marangello. Giaccone had once been a soldier in Rastelli’s *decina* in the 1960s while Zaffarano and Marangello had a history under Galante dating back to at least the 1950s, various accounts indicating the panel acted primarily in Galante’s interest.


has advised that there is some
opposition to CARMINE GALANTE in the BONANNO family.
Source continued that GALANTE has recently made a number of
new LCN members in the BONANNO family who have expressed
their loyalty to him. He stated that with the death
of CARLO GAMBINO, GALANTE becomes the most well known and
feared organized crime figure in New York although
maintaining no formal title.

Contemporary sources were aware of Galante's influence.

Galante was released in February 1979 and resumed control of the Family. Working quickly, official boss Phil Rastelli received permission from the Commission to have Galante murdered and the infamous July massacre resulted in the death of Galante and Castellammare-born Bonanno members Leonardo Coppola and Giuseppe Turano. Some of the suspected participants at or near the scene of the Galante murder were the up-and-coming Castellammarese Bonanno members Cesare Bonventre, Baldo Amato, and Toni Giordano along with Zaffarano crew member Bruno Indelicato, some also linking Sicilian faction *capodecina* Salvatore Catalano to the conspiracy. Soldiers Russell Mauro and Dominick Trinchera were other reputated shooters in the hit. Joe Massino identified the principal conspirators as Rastelli, captain Phil Giaccone, and Bruno's father Alphonse "Sonny Red" Indelicato. Circumstantial evidence implicated *consigliere* Stefano Cannone and Gambino underboss Aniello Dellacroce as well given suspected shooter Bruno Indelicato visited them immediately after the shooting appearing disheveled and tucking what was presumed to be a gun into his waistband. Cannone appeared to congratulate Indelicato with Phil Giaccone and Sonny Red standing nearby.

Zaffarano soldier Bruno Indelicato reportedly killed Galante.

Salvatore Catalano was promoted to acting boss the year following Galante's murder and a massive reorganization took place in the interim, any captain viewed as a Galante loyalist demoted and various crews split up or otherwise reordered. Zaffarano was one of the Galante-aligned captains ultimately demoted following the murder, but Joe Massino did testify that Zaffarano helped run the Family in the aftermath of the murder along with Sonny Red Indelicato and Santo "Toni" Giordano. Phil Giaccone and Frank Lupo have also been mentioned as part of the post-Galante leadership group, though Lupo

was another captain who lost his position at some point following Galante's death. Perhaps Zaffarano was used to help smooth out relations with the former Galante faction in the immediate aftermath of the change-up but the ruling faction in the Bonanno Family as of August 1979 was an unlikely alliance between the highly Americanized Rastelli loyalists and the Sicilian faction comprised of "second wave" immigrants.

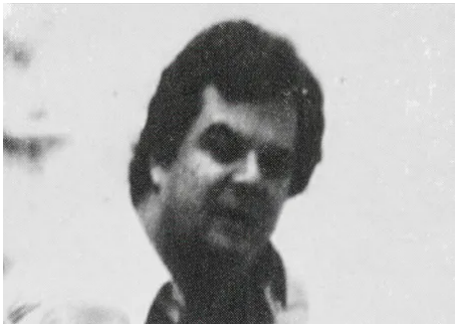
Mob mythology often states that Carmine Galante was "importing" Sicilian mafiosi into New York throughout the 1970s and he did have a close relationship to the new wave of Sicilian-born members but he did not bring them to America, most of them having arrived in the 1960s while Galante was still incarcerated. The second wave of Italian immigration brought many Sicilians to the United States for economic and practical reasons, the devastating Belice earthquake another contributing factor for some parts of the island, especially in Trapani. Many mafia affiliates were among them and additional mafiosi arrived to America in the mid-1960s after fleeing a recent government crackdown on the mafia in Palermo following a period of violent warfare. Sal Catalano arrived in the 1960s, as did Cesare Bonventre and Baldo Amato who were still teenagers at the time and had yet to become full-fledged agents of Cosa Nostra.

These recent arrivals weren't waiting to be "recruited" by Galante, as they all had existing relationships to Cosa Nostra. Sal Catalano was an affiliate of the Ciminna Family, possibly already a member there, where his relatives were significant mafia figures. His namesake cousin, known as "Saca", was a Ciminna member who operated under the Gambino Family umbrella in New York and Saca's brother Onofrio Catalano later served as Ciminna boss. A Domenico Catalano from Ciminna was also identified by Nicola Gentile as a Chicago member in the 1910s and may have been a relative, Saca Catalano once sharing information about the historic Chicago Family with Brancaccio *pentito* Gioacchino Pennino, whose uncle Salvatore LoVerde was an early Chicago boss killed in 1931; Saca told Pennino that Gentile had lied or misrepresented information in his memoir concerning LoVerde. Bonventre and Amato themselves seamlessly fit into the Bonanno Family as young Castellammaresi, Bonventre himself an extended relative of older generations of Bonanno mafiosi and both men well-connected to the international Castellammarese mafia network.

Catalano brought existing mafia connections to New York from Ciminna.

Other newly-made Castellammarese Bonanno members like Toni Giordano and Francesco Navarra were the product of their own extensive mafia clan and their relative Giovanni Fiordilino had served as a captain in the Family just years earlier. Their family was also close to Giuseppe Buccellato, a Bonanno leader helping administer the Family during the period they settled in America. These emerging figures rallied around Galante for several years but he wasn't their sole connection to the Bonanno Family and their loyalty was fleeting. Much as Joe Bonanno's unyielding support base included many "Americanized" members of the old Galante crew, Carmine Galante's own loyalists in 1979 included non-Sicilian members from his original *decina* like Zaffarano and Vito DeFilippo along with assorted old timers from the Joe Bonanno era like Michael Sabella and Matteo Valvo, the former of Sciacchitano heritage and the latter with heritage in Siracusa province on the southeastern Sicilian coast. The older Castellammaresi largely abandoned Joe Bonanno in 1964, the Asaros included, while the younger Castellammaresi abandoned Galante.

Some Zaffarano *decina* members were promoted to captain themselves after Galante's murder and others were distributed to various crews. Relevant here is that Vinny Asaro was transferred to the crew of future boss Joe Massino, a Rastelli protege from Maspeth who received a promotion after Galante's death. Massino was Campanian like his mentor and represented the new "Americanized" powerbase emerging at the top of the Family but Massino also helped maintain the Rastelli group's political alliance with the Sicilian faction. Zaffarano's demotion was essentially a formality as he died in 1980 of natural causes but his loss of power placed the Asaros under the Family's premier young leader who had no mafia lineage nor relevant ancestry.



Massino (pictured) took Vinny Asaro into his crew.

Mickey Zaffarano's entry into the Bonanno Family may have come through his connection to the Asaros but his early friendship with Moe Presinzano could mean he was recruited solely through the old Galante crowd and met his wife through an existing association with the Bonannos. Zaffarano proved himself as a hardcore criminal willing to do prison time when the Bonannos were recruiting new members in the 1940s and '50s, this coinciding with the Bonannos widening their recruitment pool to include larger numbers of Americanized and non-Sicilian members. Despite his relationship to the Asaros, his story reads somewhat differently from theirs despite their shared criminality and mafia membership. While the older Asaros help tell the story of the formative Bonanno Family and its links to the Castellammarese mafia of old, Zaffarano's tale helps flesh out the organization's middle history and its transition into a broader Italian-American phenomenon.

The Zaffaranos & Vinny Asaro

Decades after Mickey Zaffarano's death, Asaro cousin Gary Valenti testified that his initial activities with the Bonanno Family were related to Zaffarano's porn interests. Asaro supplied Valenti with individual film reels to sell and warned Valenti that the merchandise belonged to "Uncle Mickey" and if Valenti "screwed up" he would be killed. Valenti gave 100% of the profits from these sales to Asaro, who told Valenti they would first give the money to Zaffarano before splitting it up but Valenti was never given his share.

Gary Valenti was also aware of Mickey Zaffarano's peripheral involvement in the Lufthansa Heist. Though Valenti was a direct participant in the Lufthansa affair he gave no indication Zaffarano was intimately involved in the plot itself but did state that Zaffarano and Paul Vario each received $100,000 from the heist. Valenti's involvement with Zaffarano in mafia activity was indirect, Valenti taking direction from his cousin Vinny Asaro and any efforts carried out on Zaffarano's behalf were communicated through Asaro.

which Frankie Burke brought to Valenti at his house. They paid a hundred-thousand dollars in tributes from that to their Uncle Mickey Zaffarano, who was the defendant's captain at that time in the Bonanno family. Paul Vario, Jimmy Burke's captain also received a cash tribute payment of a hundred-thousand dollars; among others.

Zaffarano received a share of the Lufthansa score.

After Zaffarano's death, Vinny Asaro and Gary Valenti continued to associate with Zaffarano's son John who was a customer of the loansharking book operated by Asaro and Valenti. In addition to the $100k in tribute paid to Mickey Zaffarano from the Lufthansa score, Vinny Asaro had given his uncle a $100,000 loan the elder Zaffarano paid off before his death. Capitalizing on the undocumented nature of the illegal loan, Vinny Asaro approached John Zaffarano at his father's funeral and told him the loan had not been paid back, Mickey still owing the full $100k. John agreed to inherit the loan, paying Asaro $2000 every week to cover the 2% interest.

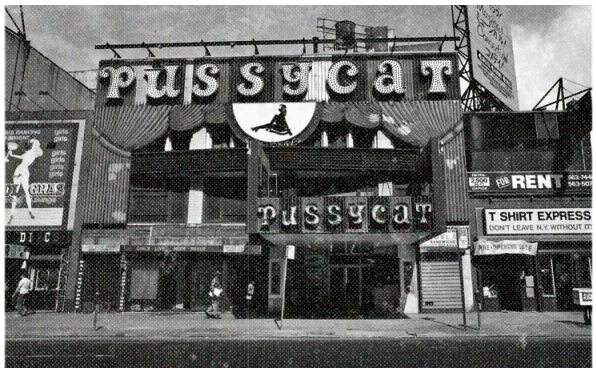
John Zaffarano also took out additional loans from Asaro for himself, mainly to help with the Pussycat Theater. John took over his father's interests in the porn industry under the supervision of Vinny Asaro and the Pussycat was one of the more prominent locations owned by the Zaffaranos. Asaro sent Valenti with John Zaffarano to California on one occasion to settle an issue with porn star Marilyn Chambers, who had been under contract to do ten movies for Mickey Zaffarano but had begun working with other producers. Valenti and John Zaffarano sat down with two Gambino associates in the porn industry, "Dino" and Stu Siegel, and they agreed to "release" Chambers back to the Bonannos so that she could fulfill her contract. John Zaffarano ultimately decided to stop working with Chambers.

Porn actress Marilyn Chambers worked with the Bonannos & Gambinos.

Around the mid-1980s, John Zaffarano sold the Pussycat Theater and moved to Florida. The theater had an adult book store that featured "peep shows" and one of these interests was owned by Matthew "Matty" Ianniello of the Genovese Family, known to Valenti as a captain. Ianniello took issue with the Pussycat sale and asked for a million dollars up front, claiming that amount as

the revenue he stood to lose through the sale of the theater. Vinny Asaro agreed with Ianniello. Gary Valenti and Al Altruda met with Ianniello, who was upset Asaro didn't attend the meeting and felt disrespected by Asaro sending two associates instead of attending himself. Asaro resolved the issue but Zaffarano was still forced to pay Ianniello the million dollars given Matty Ianniello had done business at the Pussycat for many years.

Inspired by the Ianniello situation, Vinny Asaro approached John Zaffarano and told him that he, Asaro, also deserved a million dollars from the sale of the Pussycat property, as Asaro had done many favors for Zaffarano and his father Mickey over the years. Valenti believed Zaffarano sold the property for approximately $20 million. Zaffarano thought Asaro was joking and laughed the request off, but a couple of months later Asaro sent Valenti to John's home in Florida to collect the money. Zaffarano owned a restaurant in Florida, another building that rented to bars, and a yacht that Valenti said looked "like a viking ship." During Valenti's visit, John agreed to pay half of the total requested, $500k, which Valenti took back to Asaro in NYC. Asaro however still wanted the other half and Zaffarano met with Asaro and Valenti in New York where Zaffarano asked for more time to pay the rest, which he later did.



The Zaffaranos owned New York's notorious Pussycat Theater.

John Zaffarano joined Gary Valenti by offering testimony during the 2015 Asaro trial, though he was a reluctant witness. His information more or less corroborated Valenti's testimony, though he provided more detail and made himself out to be less of a victim than in Valenti's account. John Zaffarano has passed away since the trial.

Zaffarano believed the loan Asaro had given his father Mickey before his passing was for $250,000, not the $100,000 alleged by Valenti. Valenti said Asaro tricked John Zaffarano into repaying the entire loan plus interest so perhaps Asaro convinced John Zaffarano that the original loan had been for $250,000 and $100k was still owed. Zaffarano's account matches Valenti's with regard to his weekly obligation, John confirming he paid $2000 per week to

Asaro. Zaffarano didn't recall how many years he spent paying back the loan as his memory was clouded by heavy cocaine use during the 1980s, referring to himself as living "in a big white cloud."

Asaro checked in with John Zaffarano through weekly phone calls to see if he was going to pay each week. If Zaffarano said no, Asaro "yelled and jumped up and down" in anger. Zaffarano also confirmed Gary Valenti's account of subsequent loans, admitting to borrowing additional money from Vinny Asaro for renovations on the Pussycat Theater. Zaffarano said the theater was sold in 1986 for $18.5 million, not far from Valenti's estimate of $20 million.

Zaffarano said he had to negotiate payouts with many of the tenants, which included multiple movie theaters, a topless bar, a gay bath house, and multiple sex toy stores. He confirmed that one of these tenants was Matthew Ianniello and that Asaro arranged for Zaffarano and Al Atruda to meet with Ianniello at the SPQR restaurant in Little Italy. Zaffarano said that nobody made any introductions and Ianniello attended the meeting with an attorney. Atruda was described by John Zaffarano as a "very, very, very close friend" of his father Mickey.

Ianniello had an interest in the Pussycat.

In John Zaffarano's telling, Ianniello had a topless bar in the theater and due to a pending RICO case the federal government froze his assets which complicated the sale of the Pussycat property and blocked Zaffarano's ability to pay out Ianniello. Zaffarano however was able to get the federal government to release their lock on the topless bar so that Zaffarano could sell the property and allow him to pay Ianniello. Zaffarano confirmed Ianniello wanted a million dollars, as Valenti said, but Zaffarano negotiated it down to $750k.

Zaffarano also admitted to giving Vinny Asaro money from the Pussycat sale, though he says it was between $300k to $400k and not the million alleged by Valenti. John claimed to have given money from the sale to his entire family and singled Asaro out in particular for compensation because Asaro helped

with negotiations. John also simply "wanted" to give Asaro the money. John Zaffarano said nothing to imply the arrangement was the full-fledged extortion described by Valenti but in previous testimony Zaffarano admitted he paid Asaro the money so that he could move to Florida and be left alone. He also admitted to meeting with Asaro and Valenti in Florida, giving Asaro $250k on this occasion.

The boat John Zaffarano owned in Florida was called "Top Secret" and he allowed people to book it for weddings or parties. He confirmed the boat was also hand-carved to resemble a viking ship, as Valenti said. During his testimony, John Zaffarano began "forgetting" the financial arrangement he had with Asaro for the sale of the Pussycat and the judge described Zaffarano as a "hostile witness", suggesting Zaffarano's responses took on a defensive tone. It's clear from Zaffarano's broader testimony that he was not looking to outright cooperate against Asaro, only provide neutral testimony.

John Zaffarano was a reluctant witness in the Asaro trial.

John Zaffarano's mother was Vinny Asaro's godmother in addition to being Vinny's paternal aunt though at the time of his testimony Zaffarano hadn't seen Asaro for over twenty years; "before the millennium." Zaffarano described Asaro as "charming and funny" and that the two had a "lot of laughs" together. Both he and Asaro borrowed money from each other and "nobody kept score." He again mentioned his "serious" cocaine addiction during this period and said Asaro never threatened him to repay any of the money he borrowed.

When Asaro approached John Zaffarano at his father's wake and told him about the loan he had given to his father, which as Valenti mentioned had been paid back prior to Mickey Zaffarano's death, Zaffarano went to his mother who told him to pay it because she felt "her Godson" would "never lie" to her. When Zaffarano paid Ianniello for losing his business at the Pussycat Theater, he also paid other tenants who would be losing their space and had negotiations with all of them. He paid Ianniello by check. While Valenti implied Ianniello was strong-arming Zaffarano, John Zaffarano indicated it was expected that he pay long-time tenants a percentage of the Pussycat sale.

John Zaffarano's testimony showed him to be walking a thin line between candid cooperation and protecting Vinny Asaro. Unlike the Asaros, Mickey Zaffarano didn't pass on mafia membership to his son and John was barely an associate, just someone connected to the mob through family who inevitably had dealings with them. As evidenced by the testimony of Gary Valenti and to some degree John Zaffarano, some of Mickey Zaffarano's interests and former associates were assigned to Vinny Asaro when he died. Asaro took advantage of Zaffarano's death, lying to his own cousin about an outstanding loan and attempting to get a piece of a lucrative real estate deal. Whether his approach was predatory like Valenti implied or more gentile like John Zaffarano insisted, both accounts confirm Asaro was meddling in the Zaffaranos' financial affairs after Mickey's death.

Mickey Zaffarano was the sole Asaro relative of his generation to hold a high-ranking position. Zaffarano was a much more enterprising mafioso than his in-laws the Asaros, his porn empire stretching throughout the United States. Zaffarano also helped keep the Asaros relevant during the 1970s when the older generations of the clan were dying off only for his family to be passively shaken down by Vinny Asaro when he died.

Vinny Asaro's Early History

Both Vinny Asaro (b. 1935) and cousin Gary Valenti (b. 1947) started as associates under Vinny's father Jerry Asaro, Valenti's formative experiences with Jerry discussed earlier. Though Gary was relatively unschooled in the mafia, he took direction from his cousin Vinny who included him in pornography sales on behalf of Mickey Zaffarano and the two men carried out loansharking operations and collaborated in various robberies. In the 1960s, Valenti lived across the street from Vinny in "the Hole" neighborhood and described his relation to Asaro as being "closer than cousins".

In addition to Gary Valenti, other relatives of the two men were recruited into Asaro's activities to varying degrees, including the Giallanzos and Ferreris. The relation between certain members of the Asaro clan was explained by Valenti as follows:

- Gasper Valenti's father Anthony was the brother of Vincent Asaro's mother, Josephine Valenti.
- Vincent Asaro's sister married Richard Giallanzo and two of her sons are Ronald "Ronnie" Giallanzo and Robert "Bobby" Giallanzo.
- Asaro's mother and Valenti's father had another sister with a son named Gasper "Gary" Ferreri Sr., a Family associate, who in turn had a son Gasper

"Gary" Ferreri Jr. Though Valenti didn't mention him in this part of his testimony, Gasper Sr.'s brother was Thomas Ferreri.

A wayward youth, Vinny Asaro reportedly had a heroin addiction in his younger years but recovered and by his 30s was operating Astro Fence, the Asaros having been involved in fence-building since the 1950s. Another Asaro-owned fence company was King Fence. His arrest record dated back to 1957 and included charges of rape, burglary, bank robbery, kidnapping, assault, and firearm possession. He was convicted of larceny in 1960 and third degree assault in 1967.

Astro Fence was Asaro's primary legitimate business.

Asaro's involvement in various robberies helped establish his credibility in East New York and Ozone Park underworld circles. In 1966, Vinny was arrested with associate Donald Scotto for bank robbery, the two men allegedly holding up the Jamaica Savings Bank in Queens for over $10,000. Asaro, the getaway driver, was living at 689 Drew Street in "the Hole" while Scotto, accused of committing the actual robbery, was living in Valley Stream. The two men were linked to a larger series of bank robberies supervised by Colombo *capodecina* John "Sonny" Franzese. Franzese's heritage was in Campania and although son Michael has stated Sonny's father Carmine was not a Cosa Nostra member there is circumstantial evidence he was an early New York Camorrista, FBI sources also commenting on Carmine Franzese's criminal reputation.

One of the first substantial operations Vinny Asaro had going early in his underworld career was his loanshark book, which soon included Gary Valenti as a collector. The first of Asaro's loanshark customers Valenti worked with was a neighborhood drunk named Bobby Marshall who had taken out a $100 loan and owed $10 in interest each week. Marshall typically paid Valenti but Asaro would approach Marshall when he was drunk on the weekend and tell him he hadn't paid and Marshall would pay again. Valenti claimed this arrangement went on "forever" and Marshall paid off his loan multiple times over without knowing. Valenti received none of the profits.

Asaro was engaged in street crime from a young age.

Later Valenti learned that Asaro's loansharking operation was funded by a loan from James “Jimmy” Burke. Valenti also sold "swag" for Asaro which Vinny obtained from hijacking trucks with Burke. Valenti would later commit crimes with Jimmy Burke himself and respected the notorious Irish-American gangster, Valenti observing that Burke generated large amounts of money and had a reputation for being quick to kill. Valenti described Asaro and Burke as "partners in crime" and the two were nearly inseparable for much of the 1960s and ‘70s. Jimmy Burke stood as Vinny’s son Jerry’s confirmation sponsor in 1969 and young Jerry chose to be confirmed under the name “James” in tribute to Burke. Similar to descriptions of Vinny Asaro, Valenti testified that Jimmy Burke was a funny, friendly individual with an extremely short temper.

An early associate of Burke and Asaro was Paul Katz, who owned an Ozone Park warehouse where hijacked trucks were taken and unloaded. Gary Valenti had been sent to the warehouse a number of times to help with hijacked loads. Others who used the warehouse were Jimmy Burke and his “crew”, which Valenti named as Jimmy Santos, Tommy DeSimone, Henry Hill, and Vinny Asaro. Others who unloaded trucks at the warehouse were Jimmy Santos’s brother Karl Santos, who used the nickname “Billy Budd”, and an unspecified "Howie". Both Karl Santos and “Howie” also worked at Robert's Lounge.

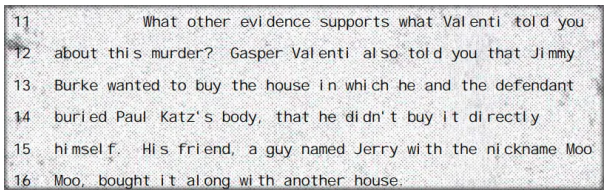
Asaro and others from Jimmy Burke’s circle were arrested at the Katz warehouse in 1969. Burke had a detective on his payroll who helped several of the others secure a quick release but Asaro remained in jail. Gary Valenti reported to Jerry Asaro that Vinny was still in jail and that his other associates had basically abandoned him. When Vinny Asaro was released, he went to Robert’s Lounge and confronted Jimmy Santos about having been left behind in jail though the blame ultimately fell on Paul Katz. Katz disappeared a short time after Vinny’s release from jail.

Asaro associated with Burke (L), DeSimone (center), & Hill (R).

When Valenti's father Anthony died in the late 1960s he inherited several houses his contractor father was in the process of building. Sometime later, Asaro asked Valenti to use one of the properties in Ozone Park for a secret meeting with Jimmy Burke. The next day, Asaro and Burke showed up to the property with Paul Katz's body and brought a sledgehammer, shovel, and breaking bar to get through the concrete and rebar in the unfinished house's basement. Valenti kept watch outside for three hours while Burke and Asaro buried Katz.

After Burke left the property, Asaro and Valenti obtained a truck with concrete that would be used to fill the hole. Asaro told Valenti he had done most of the digging because Burke injured his hand when he killed Katz, the murder carried out via strangulation with a dog chain. Asaro also told Valenti that Katz had been a "rat". Paul Katz, it would turn out, was an actual police informant which his wife and son confirmed at the 2015 Asaro trial. When they returned, they covered the body with lime and Valenti filled the hole with straight concrete without first filling it with any dirt.

Burke ended up purchasing the home where the body was buried using his associate Jerry "Moo Moo" Vita as a front for the purchase. Vita owned a dress shop next to Robert's Lounge. The home was later purchased by Burke's daughter Cathy, who would marry Bonanno member Bruno Indelicato. Cathy Burke also bought the home next door, which had been owned by relatives of Jerry Vita on Jimmy Burke's behalf much like the Katz burial house.


11 What other evidence supports what Valenti told you
12 about this murder? Gasper Valenti also told you that Jimmy
13 Burke wanted to buy the house in which he and the defendant
14 buried Paul Katz's body, that he didn't buy it directly
15 himself. His friend, a guy named Jerry with the nickname Moo
16 Moo, bought it along with another house.

Burke purchased the site of the Katz murder through a proxy.

Sometime during the 1980s, Jimmy Burke began to get "delusions" in prison and sent word to Vinny Asaro that he wanted the Katz body moved. The remains were dug up by Valenti and Vinny's son Jerome "Jerry" Asaro, again with the use of sledgehammer, breaking bar, and shovel. They took Katz's

remains to one of the Asaros' fence companies in cardboard boxes and the younger Jerry Asaro told Valenti he would put them in paint cans filled with cement and dispose of them at a property he had upstate. The property was a hunting lodge Asaro owned with Frank LaPetina, a Gambino associate who Valenti and the Asaros periodically committed crimes with.

Vinny Asaro's association with Jimmy Burke's circle is evident from other early arrests. He was arrested with Tommy DeSimone and a group of associates for theft of an interstate shipment in 1969 after a hijacking incident led police to a warehouse in South Jamaica, Queens, where multiple trailers of stolen merchandise were discovered. Asaro was sentenced to five years probation after being convicted on the charge. The following year, Asaro was arrested with Thomas Stabile in another hijacking case after $70k in stolen women's lingerie was found in a shed behind associate Louis D'Aquino's home on Cross Bay Boulevard. In 1972, Vinny was arrested again for attempting to crack a safe at an Ozone Park post office with associates Arthur Lategano and Robert Amelio and received a six month sentence to be served on weekends over the course of a year.

Asaro continued to accumulate arrests as a Bonanno associate.

Salvatore "Sal" Vitale testified that he first met Asaro around 1975 when Vitale needed someone to build a fence for his home. Joe Massino told Vitale he had a "fence guy", who turned out to be Asaro. Vitale felt Vinny Asaro did an "outstanding job" and the Vitales were still using the same fence at their home when Sal became a cooperating witness. Vitale's wife upset him as she told Asaro they would pay him for the fence using the "numbers money", meaning they would deduct money from a numbers operation Asaro and Vitale were involved in. Asaro reassured Vitale after his wife's comment, saying her remarks were fine given both he and Vitale were both so close to Joe Massino.

Gary Valenti believed Vinny Asaro became a made member in 1977 or 1978, other evidence suggesting it was around summer 1977. Gary drove Asaro to a Brooklyn diner and dropped him off but was instructed not to pick him back up. Later Asaro told Valenti he had been "straightened out" in the mausoleum

of a cemetery by Carmine Galante. According to Valenti, Asaro was sponsored for membership by both his father Jerry Asaro and uncle Mickey Zaffarano. Jerry died in July 1977 so he may have died around the time of Vinny's induction. As a soldier, Vinny Asaro remained active along the East New York and Ozone Park border but would maintain a residence in Howard Beach where many members of various Families also resided after leaving their original neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens.

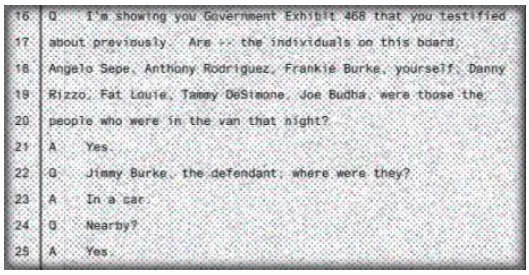
Peter Zuccaro, then a Bonanno associate, recalled in his own testimony that Vinny Asaro was made in 1973 or 1974. Though his timeline was inaccurate, Zuccaro remembered Asaro's induction because he saw him later the same night. Zuccaro was at a bar called the Lil' Cricket in Howard Beach and news of Asaro's induction quickly spread throughout the establishment when Asaro came by that evening. Gambino associate Tony Mosciatello even played a song Zuccaro referred to as "Wiseguy in the Cricket." According to Zuccaro, numerous men and women from the neighborhood spent the night celebrating Asaro's initiation into Cosa Nostra. The Lil' Cricket was decimated by an explosion the following year, a man having been seen entering the bar just moments before the building was torn apart by the early morning blast.

The Lil' Cricket was decimated the year after Asaro's induction.

Vinny was also set up in a lucrative high-stakes card game in the late 1970s through Mickey Zaffarano. Zaffarano's longtime associate Sandro Aiosa ran the Cafe Anita and Asaro was allowed in as a partner, the two men pulling large sums of money from the game's profits for about six months before being shut down. Aiosa was placed on record with Vinny Asaro after Zaffarano's death and made into the Bonanno Family much later. Following Cafe Anita, Asaro opened the Triangle Club in Ozone Park which served as his headquarters for many years.

Robert's Lounge in Ozone Park was the main headquarters for Vinny Asaro's network of associates from the late 1960s through most of the 1970s. Among the men Valenti remembered seeing at Robert's Lounge were Burke, Asaro,

Jimmy Santos, John Savino, Tommy DeSimone, Henry Hill, Joe “Buddha” Manri, Daniel Rizzo, Angelo Sepe, Anthony Rodriguez, Louis Cafora, and Robert "Frenchie" McMahon. The lounge itself was owned by Burke, Vinny Asaro, Jimmy Santos, and John Savino. Asaro and Valenti were also involved in a credit card scam during this period, Valenti receiving stolen credit cards from Henry Hill that he used to buy merchandise for Asaro, who then sold the items for cash.



Q I'm showing you Government Exhibit 468 that you testified about previously. Are -- the individuals on this board, Angelo Sepe, Anthony Rodriguez, Frankie Burke, yourself, Danny Rizzo, Fat Louie, Tammy DeSimone, Joe Budha, were those the people who were in the van that night?
A Yes.
Q Jimmy Burke, the defendant, where were they?
A In a car.
Q Nearby?
A Yes.

Valenti offered his own perspective on Lufthansa.

The December 1978 Lufthansa Heist at JFK Airport came from a tip given to Henry Hill by Martin Krugman but Gary Valenti said Hill was never at the scene of the actual robbery. Valenti was recruited by Asaro who believed the score was for $2 million in cash being delivered from Germany. Meetings were held to plan the heist at Robert’s Lounge and Jimmy Burke’s home, schematics of the airport hangar being given to them by Hill who obtained them from Krugman.

Asaro encouraged Valenti to scope out the hangar prior to the robbery and Valenti did scout the area with Frank Burke, Jimmy’s son. It was decided that Asaro and Burke would sit in a crash car some distance from the actual robbery, Burke wanting to avoid getting hit with a third “strike” as it would mean substantial jail time due to his criminal record. Excluding Asaro and Jimmy Burke in the crash car, the full list of on-scene Lufthansa Heist participants given by Valenti included Valenti himself, Frank Burke, Angelo Sepe, Anthony Rodriguez, Danny Rizzo, Louis Cafora, Tommy DeSimone, and Joe Manri. The robbery crew planned to use a dark van for transporting the stolen loot.

Logistics for the heist were naturally planned in advance.

After arriving at the airport, Valenti cut through a locked gate and Frank Burke drove their van to the hangar. Frank subdued a security guard and Valenti pistol-whipped the hostage when he fought back. Another guard also arrived on the scene and he too was kidnapped, Valenti and Burke then taking the captives inside where the men were held with other airport employees in a lunchroom. Lucchese associates Danny Rizzo and Tommy DeSimone were active participants in the actual robbery and after gaining access to the vault the group discovered large amounts of cash and jewelry in the stored packages which were quickly hoarded into the waiting getaway van.

After leaving the scene, the participants met briefly with Asaro and Burke in Ozone Park then Asaro suggested they take the loot to Valenti's home in "the Hole". The group counted out the massive haul before Asaro drove Burke and DeSimone back to Manhattan where the two men were staying in a halfway house. Asaro was elated to discover far more money and jewelry than they originally expected but word quickly spread to Gambino member Anthony "Fat Andy" Ruggiano and Asaro's mood shifted to paranoia over the possibility that rival mafiosi could kill them in order to steal the haul.

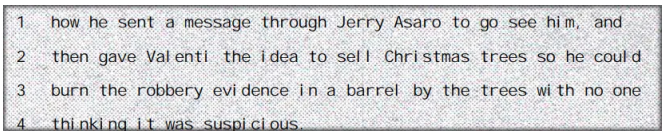
Some of the score, which was initially stored at Valenti's home, was taken to Carmine Persico's property in Upstate New York by Colombo associate Angelo Sepe. Some of Vinny Asaro's father's former associates also stored some of the stolen loot, this noted in the section on Jerry Asaro. In addition to Mickey Zaffarano and Paul Vario each receiving $100k, tribute from Lufthansa was also given to John Gotti in order to "keep the peace", Asaro and Burke believing it would deter Gotti's people from trying to rob the participants in the Lufthansa score.

Sepe (L) used Persico (R) to store loot from the heist.

Gambino member Anthony "Tony Lee" Guerrieri was used to fence the stolen gold through his jewelry store though Andy Ruggiano's son Anthony Jr. recalled his father becoming angry that Guerrieri split the profits with the store's other partners. Peter Vario also received a cut, though Valenti was confused by this as Peter had no involvement in the robbery to his knowledge.

It's not specified which Peter Vario this was in reference to, Paul Vario having both a son and nephew named Peter who became Lucchese members but it was presumably Paul's son.

Though Asaro and Valenti's involvement in the heist was left out of *Goodfellas*, Valenti confirmed that Asaro and Burke cautioned their associates not to spend the money too quickly. They similarly discouraged the robbers from spending time at Robert's Lounge, believing it was under surveillance. Vinny Asaro even kept his distance from Valenti, using his son Jerry as a go-between. Vinny sent word through Jerry instructing Valenti to open a Christmas tree lot that year where a burn barrel could be used to destroy evidence. Though Vinny Asaro was initially circumspect in handling his end of the Lufthansa score, he eventually used the money to buy a home in Moriches, Long Island, and also purchased a boat and Lincoln town car. According to Valenti, most of his and Asaro's money from the score ended up being gambled away.


how he sent a message through Jerry Asaro to go see him, and
then gave Valenti the idea to sell Christmas trees so he could
burn the robbery evidence in a barrel by the trees with no one
thinking it was suspicious.
Valenti burned evidence from the robbery at a Christmas tree lot.

Numerous murders took place in the aftermath of the Lufthansa Heist, most of them attributed to Jimmy Burke. Vinny Asaro assisted with the burial of at least one. Richard Eaton was a drug dealer connected to Jimmy Burke who was murdered by the latter in January of 1979 following a visit to the "Afters" nightclub operated by Burke and Asaro. "Afters" was managed by Gary Valenti and according to him, the "Afters" name was coined by Vinny Asaro and meant to infer "After Lufthansa". The location was also two doors down from King Fence, one of the Asaro-owned fence companies.

After Burke murdered Eaton, Vinny Asaro asked his son Jerry and Gary Valenti to dig a grave for the murdered man in an empty lot in "the Hole" but it proved difficult because of the winter climate. They used fuel to try and soften the ground but it was still too frozen to dig. Burke eventually came to the scene with an associate named Tom Monteleone and informed Valenti to dig near salt water next time, as proximity to salt water makes it difficult for the ground to freeze.

Unable to successfully dig a hole, Eaton's body was left in an abandoned trailer in "the Hole" neighborhood near Valenti's mother's house. The trailer had been previously stolen by Valenti and other associates, emptied of merchandise, and left in the neighborhood. The following day a police officer

came to Valenti's house and informed him that the victim of a “mafia hit” had been found on Valenti's mother's property. A woman who grew up in "the Hole" later told the media that neighborhood children once discovered the victim of a mob murder in a trailer and that the victim had his tongue cut out. This was likely Eaton's body, though Valenti said nothing about his tongue being severed. Eaton’s body however was frozen, this detail mythologized further in *Goodfellas* with a composite character who was murdered and disposed of in an ice truck.

“The Hole” was used for numerous Asaro-related crimes.

Among those who hung out at “Afters” nightclub were Jimmy Burke, Angelo Sepe, Vittorio “Vic” Amuso, Vinny Asaro, Vinny’s son Jerry Asaro, Daniel Rizzo, and Henry Hill. Colombo soldier Dominic Cataldo was also part of this circle, owning a restaurant near Asaro's fence company and the “Afters” club. An associate of Cataldo named Mickey Brown had a nephew whose wife worked for Vinny Asaro in the office of the fence company and the Brown men accused Asaro of having an affair with the nephew’s wife. When Asaro was confronted by the Browns, Vinny pulled out a gun and began firing it in the air. Brown's nephew began to move toward Asaro and Valenti restrained him, at which point Vinny’s son Jerry hit the nephew with the gun and it went off, a bullet striking the nephew.

Mickey Brown took his nephew to the hospital and Asaro immediately contacted Jimmy Burke. Asaro wanted Burke with him in case any more violence was needed so Burke brought someone called "Mitch" to the fence company with a satchel full of guns. There was blood on the carpet from the accidental shooting of Brown's nephew, so Burke took a knife and cut the soiled patch of carpet out from the floor. Burke had the Asaros leave the office and stayed behind with Valenti, the two men planning to shoot Brown and his people if they returned. The Browns never arrived so Burke and Valenti confronted Mickey Brown at his car lot, Burke warning Brown he would kill him on the spot if he had any plans to retaliate against Asaro. Brown subsequently dropped the matter.

The “Afters” nightclub closed down due to heat from the Lufthansa Heist and ensuing murders, then it was rented to black clients who turned it into a

supper club catering to black clientele. Dominic Cataldo, who owned the nearby restaurant, felt the new club didn't belong in a white neighborhood so he reached out to Vinny Asaro, who had Gary Valenti and his son Jerry Asaro torch the club. Valenti and Jerry poured gasoline throughout the establishment then lit a tennis ball on fire and threw it into the building, the ball's bounce igniting the gasoline in different places. Cataldo personally thanked Valenti and the Asaros after the black-owned club burned down.

Cataldo was part of Asaro's Ozone Park circle.

Along with building his resume in Cosa Nostra, Vinny Asaro's reputation for irritability gained notoriety in Brooklyn and Queens during these years. On one occasion in the 1970s, an associate of Asaro's named "John" who owned the Ozone Bar was asked to supply beer for a neighborhood 4th of July party after the partiers ran out of booze. After providing the beer, John asked to be paid for his services. Vinny Asaro instructed Valenti to "pay" John by taking him around the corner and physically assaulting him. Valenti struck John and another Asaro associate named "Ray" shoved a beer bottle in John's mouth. Asaro told the men to teach John "respect".

After reporting back after the assault, Asaro instructed Valenti, Asaro's nephew Bobby Giallanzo, a "Charlie", and Patrick DelloRusso Jr. to go to John's Ozone Bar and wreck it. Asaro told them not to take anything from the bar or hurt anyone but the crew ended up destroying everything in the bar, including mirrors, pinball machines, and all of the alcohol bottles. This was done because Asaro felt that John, as an associate, was out of line by asking to be paid for supplying the beer, Asaro claiming to have done favors for John in the past. It turned out that "Charlie" had stolen money from the Ozone Bar when they destroyed it, causing Vinny to fly off the handle and break Charlie's jaw at the conclusion of the 4th of July party.

Patrick "Patty" DelloRusso Jr. from the July 4th party and his father Patty Sr., nicknamed "Patty Miserable" were originally associates on record with Vinny Asaro under the Bonanno Family. Sometime in the 1980s, the younger DelloRusso was working for one of Asaro's fence construction companies and

robbed a woman's jewelry without letting his partner "Ray" know. Disgusted by DelloRusso's failure to include his partner in the theft, Asaro "chased" DelloRusso who subsequently became associated with the Lucchese Family's Vario crew and was eventually proposed for membership. Asaro met with one the crew's leaders, Louis Daidone, and told him about the jewelry incident in an attempt to discourage Daidone from inducting DelloRusso but he was made regardless and in recent years has been identified as a member of the Lucchese Family's administration.

Vinny Asaro in the Post-Galante Bonanno Family

Vinny Asaro's uncle Mickey Zaffarano was at the center of the Galante-Rastelli conflict of the late 1970s but there's no evidence to suggest Vinny, by then a relatively new soldier, was particularly invested or involved in the leadership dispute. Zaffarano was demoted after Carmine Galante's 1979 murder and died the following year but Asaro was reassigned to newly-promoted Queens captain Joe Massino, Sal Vitale recalling that James "Jimmy" Galante was another member placed with Massino. Galante had been recently demoted from his own *capodecina* position and was the nephew of Carmine Galante. Massino had belonged to Jimmy Galante's crew for a time and also spent a period assigned to Phil Giaccone.

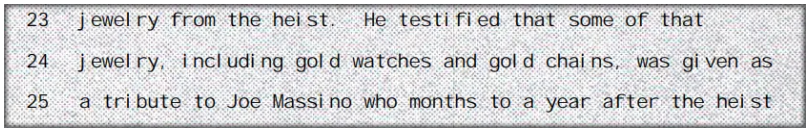
Jimmy Galante (pictured) was another member under Massino.

Sal Vitale was told by Massino that Asaro's father and grandfather had been made members of the Bonanno Family. Vitale also knew Jimmy Burke through Joe Massino, who took Vitale to Robert's Lounge during the 1970s. Known to Vitale as a Colombo associate, a wealth of evidence confirms Burke was later released to the Lucchese Family although he worked with members and associates of many different groups.

Asaro rarely came to Massino and Vitale's J&S Cake Social Club in Queens even though he was a member of Massino's crew. Joe Massino once observed to Vitale that Asaro always came to the club with someone else who waited in the car. Massino believed Asaro was worried that Massino and Vitale were going to kill him, Vitale describing Asaro as "paranoid". At one point Asaro took

on a $50,000 loan from Massino and Vitale's loansharking operation, Massino speculating that Asaro took out the loan as a form of life insurance, beliving Asaro felt Massino would be less likely to kill him if he owed his captain money.

As a gesture of good will, Vinny Asaro also gave Massino some of the stored Lufthansa jewelry as tribute even though Massino hadn't been Asaro's captain when the actual heist took place. Some of the money and jewlery was distributed to the surviving participants from the robbery over a period of time afterward as well and Gary Valenti said both he and Asaro received their full share of $750k each even though the two men squandered their newfound wealth. Like Asaro, Valenti gambled away much of his end. They also used money from the score to expand their loansharking operations.


23 jewelry from the heist. He testified that some of that
24 jewelry, including gold watches and gold chains, was given as
25 a tribute to Joe Massino who months to a year after the heist

Asaro offered Massino some of the Lufthansa spoils.

Although Vinny Asaro had no involvement in the murders of the "three captains" in May 1981, the incident deserves elaboration as it significantly contributed to Joe Massino's rise and involved important Sicilian and specifically Castellammarese names. In 1980, Sicilian faction leader Sal Catalano from Ciminna became the Family's new acting boss but eventually stepped down, his foreign background given as one of the reasons he was unable to effectively manage the Family. The captains then consulted with the Commission and held a vote for a new acting boss and *capodecina* Salvatore Ferrugia was elected with a majority eight votes opposed to seven, confirming the Family had fifteen captains at the time. In his testimony, Joe Massino stated that "we won" the vote and placed himself with the Ferrugia faction. He says this faction included Dominick "Sonny Black" Napolitano, Salvatore Catalano, Cesare Bonventre, Gerlando Sciascia, Giovanni Ligammari, Santo Giordano, *consigliere* Stefano Cannone, and the leader Salvatore Ferrugia. The other men were captains or acting captains, Ligammari being a native of Alessandria della Rocca in Agrigento with relatives in the Sicilian mafia and Giordano a Castellammarese mafioso as noted previously.

Alphonse "Sonny Red" Indelicato, Phil Giaccone, and Dominick Trinchera rose up in the organization as top captains after the 1979 murder of Carmine Galante, all three men directly involved in Galante's downfall, but despite siding with the Rastelli faction initially they splintered into their own rogue faction. Indelicato was from Little Italy and had heritage in Sciacca, his older

extended relatives affiliating with the Gambino Family, while Giaccone of Queens was also of Agrigentino heritage, though his father was from Santa Margherita di Belice just inland from Sciacca on the southern Trapani-Agrigento border, a hometown shared with a small number of earlier Bonanno members; the Bronx-based Trinchera was the exception, seemingly a non-Sicilian. Interestingly, a contemporary FBI report also identifies former captain Mike Sabella from Sciacca as another ally of the trio, these parallels in heritage for three of the men a possible coincidence but showing a pattern worthy of mention. Giaccone was reportedly the political powerhouse of the group while Indelicato was the most feared and formidable of the three, his son Bruno a captain as well after having served previously under Asaro's uncle Mickey Zaffarano.

Rastelli loyalists like Joe Massino and "Sonny Black" Indelicato orchestrated an alliance with the Sicilian faction and obliterated the three rival leaders in a staged "captains meeting" where a hidden team of killers wiped Indelicato, Giaccone, and Trinchera out in a chaotic wash of gunfire, again securing the incarcerated Rastelli's place as official *rappresentante*. The would-be meeting was hosted by Santo Giordano and in addition to the other Family *capidecine* (at least two of which were uninvolved in the plot), Massino testified that the hidden hit team included Massino's brother-in-law Sal Vitale, Vito Rizzuto, and "Vinny from Canada" (elsewhere identified as Emanuele Ragusa). The latter two men were Montreal-based Bonanno members or associates at the time brought down by their *capodecina* Gerlando Sciascia, who inadvertently became a shooter in the murder when a handgun was dropped, Sciascia picking it up and firing it at one of the victims. Sciascia and Ragusa were born in Cattolica Eraclea while Rizzuto had heritage there, Vito being the son of Nicolo Rizzuto. Massino also identified Giordano's relative Francesco Navarra and an "old timer" named Bonventre as additional "shooters".

1	A Sal Vitale was one of the shooters, Vito from Canada was
2	another shooter, Vinny from Canada was another shooter, Frank
3	Navarra that was a shooter and some old timer by the name of
4	Bonventre, who was a shooter.

Massino identified an elder "Bonventre" as part of the 1981 hit squad.

When I initially saw Massino's testimony, I theorized that the "old timer" named Bonventre was Gaspare "Nino" Bonventre, the uncle of Santo Giordano and therefore also a relative of Navarra. Giordano was accidentally shot and ultimately paralyzed during the incident and was reportedly taken to his uncle Bonventre's home by the Sicilian-born attendees where the men sought medical attention for their injured ally, directly connecting Gaspare Bonventre to the conspirators that night. Additionally, Dr. James Buccellato told me of an

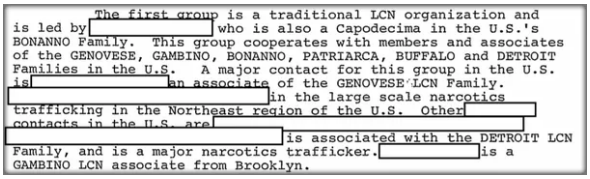
unrelated document produced by Italian authorities that identified a Gaspare Bonventre as a Castellammarese mafioso with a violent reputation once known to travel between the United States and Sicily. These circumstantial details heavily pointed to Giordano's uncle Gaspare Bonventre as the unspecified "Bonventre" mentioned by Massino and this was confirmed by Frank Fiordilino more recently, Fiordilino being a relative of these men.

Gaspare Bonventre was likely a descendant of Vito Bonventre's (b. 1875) branch, the in-law of Girolamo Asaro's brother Vincenzo mentioned in the 1908 letter to Girolamo by Uncle Stefano Magaddino, given Vito's father was a Gaspare Bonventre and this name was passed down through his line, this also being the name of descendant Cesare Bonventre's father, who was close to these men. Gaspare "Nino" Bonventre was presumably made in Castellammare and has never been identified as a Bonanno member but his inclusion in the murder, which was overlooked by Sal Vitale in his own memory of the incident, further connects the Bonventre name to major events in Bonanno Family history. The bloody handiwork of Bonventre and the other shooters was as much in the interest of the Sicilian faction as it was the "American" element groomed by Phil Rastelli, the murder of the three captains securing Sally Ferrugia's position as acting boss and he was assisted in this role by a ruling panel consisting of New York-based Montreal *capodecina* Gerlando Sciascia and Joe Massino, Vinny Asaro's captain in Queens.

Gerlando Sciascia was confirmed as the Montreal *capodecina* by May of 1981 in Joe Massino's account but it's not evident when he formally succeeded Vic Cotroni, who passed away in 1984. Perhaps Cotroni, who began as a soldier in the Carmine Galante crew and was reluctant to turn against Galante's mentor Joe Bonanno in the 1960s, was among the demotions that took place after Galante's 1979 murder. The January 1978 murder of Cotroni's acting captain Paolo Violi was undoubtedly a factor as well, the Montreal group's Sicilian faction gaining more traction in the wake of Violi's death alongside their Sicilian counterparts in New York, of which Sciascia was a bridge.

In addition to contemporary FBI reports identifying Gerlando Sciascia as a captain in 1981, a December 1984 FBI report after Vic Cotroni's death lists a redacted name, likely Sciascia, as a Bonanno *capodecina* in charge of Montreal and states that the Bonanno Montreal crew associated with the Genovese, Gambino, New England, Buffalo, and Detroit Families, with little known about the extent of these relationships although drug trafficking is a reasonable assumption. Partinicese Detroit member and drug trafficker Raffaele "Jimmy" Quasarano was a suspected Montreal associate of the era. New England is the most mysterious mention but Michael Caruana, noted earlier for his ties to

Mickey Zaffarano, was a made member by this time (although he disappeared that same year) and was a major drug kingpin; his surname also denotes Agrigentino heritage and he shares it with the Caruanas from Siculiana who were among the Montreal Cattolicensi's closest associates. That Gerlando Sciascia was not simply a captain but also part of the entire Bonanno Family's ruling panel with Joe Massino by 1981 confirms not only his stature in Canada but within the New York mafia as a whole and his stature overseas is also well-established.



The first group is a traditional LCN organization and is led by [redacted] who is also a Capodecima in the U.S.'s BONANNO Family. This group cooperates with members and associates of the GENOVESE, GAMBINO, BONANNO, PATRIARCA, BUFFALO and DETROIT Families in the U.S. A major contact for this group in the U.S. is [redacted] an associate of the GENOVESE LCN Family. [redacted] in the large scale narcotics trafficking in the Northeast region of the U.S. Other [redacted] contacts in the U.S. are [redacted] is associated with the DETROIT LCN Family, and is a major narcotics trafficker. [redacted] is a GAMBINO LCN associate from Brooklyn.

A 1984 report identified ties between Sciascia-led Montreal and Detroit.

In addition to his *capodecina*'s involvement, Vinny Asaro was indirectly relevant to the murders of the three captains in that their bodies were buried in "the Hole" neighborhood on the border of East Brooklyn and Ozone Park where the Asaro clan long held court. Though the bodies of the victims were prepped by a team of assorted Bonanno members, it was the Gambino Family's Bergin crew under Carmine Fatico's acting captain John Gotti who buried the bodies in an empty lot in "the Hole". It's unknown and perhaps unlikely that Vinny Asaro was directly told the location of the buried mob captains, this spot chosen for its obscure, desolate location in the otherwise dense urban landscape of New York City, but it is fitting that Castellammarese mafiosi participated in the murders and the deceased captains were then taken to "the Hole" where a prominent Sicilian-American Castellammarese clan and their relatives lived for many years. Asaro obviously recognized the sinister value of "the Hole", as evidenced by the disposal of Burke murder victim Richard Eaton in the years before the three captains were murdered.

Mafia members both lived and died in "the Hole".

In 1981, while still a Bonanno associate, Peter Zuccaro was called to the Bergin club by Gambino members John Gotti and Angelo Ruggiero. Gotti, then an acting *capodecina* for Carmine Fatico, was angry and accused Zuccaro of being a heroin addict. Zuccaro showed Gotti that his arms were free of track marks and attempted to convince him otherwise, but Gotti remained angry. Zuccaro learned that Vinny Asaro was the one who told Gotti about Zuccaro's drug use. Zuccaro met with his Bonanno superior Frank Bonomo afterward, who told him he shouldn't have gone to the Bergin club given Gotti didn't have the authority to call him in. Bonomo said Gotti was supposed to have contacted Zuccaro through him, Bonomo, and Bonomo subsequently held a meeting with John Gotti to discuss the issue. Following the meeting, Frank Bonomo told Zuccaro to have nothing to do with Gotti or Asaro moving forward.

In contrast to Vinny Asaro's incessant greed and the heavy "street tax" he placed on even his own cousin Gary Valenti, Peter Zuccaro testified that Frank Bonomo never asked for any tribute from Zuccaro's scores even though Zuccaro was expected to put his criminal activities on record with Bonomo. Similarly, Joe Massino later testified that the Bonanno Family did not demand any money from its members' activities outside of Christmas and birthday tribute for the boss and nominal payments to the Family's "war chest". Other sources confirm that profits from the Family's "Joker Poker" machines were used to further fund the "war chest" but Sal Vitale echoed Massino's claim, stating that he did pay Joe Massino half of his earnings dating back to his early years as an associate but he did this voluntarily to thank Massino for recruiting him into the mafia fold. The leadership did receive payments from members from other operations but these were typically partnerships or the leader in question had invested in an underling's operations and was simply receiving a "return on investment". Perhaps Bonomo's relaxed approach to Zuccaro was part of this larger pattern.

Gary Valenti testified that he was with Vinny Asaro on a prior occasion when they learned Peter Zuccaro had killed one of the guard dogs at an auto body shop owned by Zuccaro and Asaro nephew Bobby Giallanzo. Valenti claimed Asaro was enraged by the news as Asaro was an "animal lover" and particularly fond of dogs. Zuccaro was still a Bonano associate under Frank Bonomo at this time, later being released and claimed by the Gambino Family. Zuccaro was a tough hoodlum and major marijuana dealer who operated in the same neighborhoods as the Asaros and testified against Vinny Asaro in 2015 after becoming a cooperating witness. The Bonanno member Zuccaro was originally with, Frank Bonomo, was born in Castellammare del Golfo and after

a period in Williamsburg and Bushwick he lived in Flatbush like several of the older Asaros once did before moving to Long Island.

Bonomo was an old line Castellammarese Bonanno member.

Zuccaro offered his own perspective on the dog incident during his testimony in the Asaro trial, confirming he was partners in an autobody chop shop with Bobby Giallanzo circa late 1970s. Zuccaro and Giallanzo kept attack dogs on the premises and one of the dogs didn't recognize Zuccaro after he returned from a robbery one evening wearing a hat and glasses so the dog mauled him. Zuccaro and Gambino associate Andrew Curro killed the dog allegedly in self-defense. Later that night, Vinny Asaro, Jimmy Burke, Tommy DeSimone, “Stacks” Edwards, and Frank Burke showed up at Zuccaro's home and a screaming Asaro said he was going to have Zuccaro killed for shooting the dog.

Vinny Asaro was irrational and wouldn't listen to Zuccaro's explanation. Asaro was particularly upset because the shop was co-owned by his nephew and Asaro felt the dog belonged to him, though Zuccaro insisted they owned the dogs 50/50. The confrontation culminated in a sitdown between Frank Bonomo, Asaro's captain Joe Massino, Vinny Asaro, and Zuccaro. Asaro told Massino, "I'm your brother," during the meeting in an effort to gain his captain’s support, drawing on their mutual membership in Cosa Nostra, but Massino ruled in the associate Zuccaro's favor. Asaro requested approval to commit an act of violence against Zuccaro for killing the dog but the request was denied.

After Zuccaro was released to the Gambinos in the 1990s, Vinny Asaro ran the “Great In-Pasta” restaurant next to an auto business that washed cars, the sidewalk near the restaurant frequently "soaked" with water as a result of the runoff. Asaro's shoes would get wet when he went to his restaurant and he directed his anger at a young employee named “Dean” who washed cars for the auto shop. “Dean” went to Zuccaro for help, who reached out to Gambino member Charles Carneglia and he resolved the issue with Asaro. In return for the favor, Carneglia asked Zuccaro to intimidate an extortion victim for him in an unrelated matter.

Asaro ran a restaurant during the 1990s.

Zuccaro also did prison time with Gambino member Lenny DiMaria, who told him about previous problems between Vinny Asaro and Ronnie Trucchio, another Gambino member. When a proposed member list including Trucchio was given to Asaro by the Gambino Family during the 1980s, Asaro knocked Trucchio down and attempted to prevent his induction. Proposed member lists are distributed to the members of other Families who have the right to raise an issue should a candidate have baggage that needs to be addressed though it's unclear what Asaro's specific issue with Trucchio consisted of and there were numerous conflicts between Asaro and this faction of the Gambino Family spanning decades. Asaro's protests apparently delayed Trucchio's induction but Trucchio was eventually made during the late 1980s and even became a Gambino captain later.

Gary Valenti described another contentious incident involving an associate of Vinny Asaro named Joe Marsala who ran gas stations and car businesses during the 1980s. In Valenti's account, Marsala used to give Vinny free gas and let him lease a car for free but Marsala began complaining about not being repaid for these favors, which provoked Asaro to start abusing Marsala and labeling him a "rat". Valenti said Marsala approached Sal Vitale and complained, Vitale then telling Asaro to back off. Asaro took offense to this as Vitale was not yet a made member. Sal Vitale also testified about the Marsala situation during the Asaro trial and his account is similar to Valenti's recollections though Vitale said he simply carried a message from Asaro's captain Joe Massino instructing Asaro to relent, Massino being on the lam in Pennsylvania in the mid-1980s when this occurred. It is clear from both Vitale and Valenti's testimony that Asaro blamed Vitale for meddling in the issue regardless of Massino's involvement.

A sitdown over the Marsala issue was eventually held between Bonanno boss Phil Rastelli, Vinny Asaro, Cesare Bonventre, and Baldo Amato. Valenti said Bonventre was "on the committee", other sources confirming Bonventre was a

capodecina who served on a ruling panel during this period. According to Valenti, Rastelli sided against Asaro and wanted to reassign Joe Marsala to another member. Asaro spoke Sicilian dialect to Bonventre and Amato during the meeting but Rastelli was unable to understand them and Asaro, Bonventre, and Amato picked Valenti up after the meeting then drove out to Long Island in the middle of the night. Valenti was scared for his life because he assumed Asaro, Bonventre, and Amato were going against the decision of "the boss" and their behavior suggested they were planning something nefarious but the trio only ended up looking at a boat one of the men was interested in purchasing.

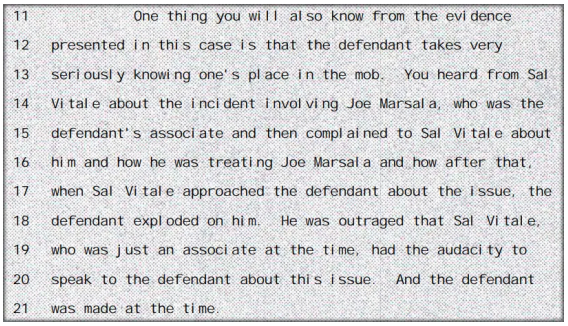
Valenti and Asaro visited Cesare Bonventre's social club in Brooklyn on one occasion. Valenti recalled that the club itself was on the second floor of the building and designed entirely in marble and granite. When they arrived, Cesare Bonventre was wearing a yellow sweater and Valenti recalled that Baldo Amato may have been there as well. Valenti said Bonventre dressed "very sharp." Though he didn't comment on Asaro sharing Castellammarese heritage with Bonventre and Amato, the story of the three men speaking Sicilian together in front of Rastelli and other general association suggests the men had a degree of comradery based on their shared heritage. As this article demonstrated earlier, there were also early ties and a distant marital relation between the Asaros and Bonventres dating back to Girolamo Asaro's time.

The "Americanized" Rastelli couldn't understand Sicilian dialect.

Sal Vitale's side of the Marsala dispute is overall similar to Valenti's version but adds a different perspective. Vitale knew Joe Marsala as an associate of Vinny Asaro who ran an auto shop. Marsala contacted Vitale and asked for help, as he felt Asaro was going to kill him. Vitale then visited Massino in the Poconos who instructed Vitale to carry a message telling Asaro to wait until Massino returned from Pennsylvania before taking action with regard to Marsala. When Vitale informed Asaro of Massino's instructions, Asaro argued that Marsala was loaning money on Crossbay Boulevard without Asaro's approval and causing other issues.

Shortly after the meeting with Asaro, Sal Vitale was summoned to McCarren Park in Greenpoint by boss Phil Rastelli. Rastelli thanked Vitale for helping with the "1981 situation" (a reference to the triple murder of three rogue Bonanno captains) and assisting Rastelli's brothers while Rastelli was incarcerated. Rastelli asked Vitale about the Asaro-Marsala issue and Vitale pointed out that he himself wasn't having a dispute with Asaro, only carrying a directive from Massino. Rastelli told Vitale that he, Vitale, was going to be “straightened out” eventually and that Asaro was already a member, pointing out that Vitale would "be with Vinny" for the rest of his life. Rastelli stressed the importance of Vitale maintaining an amicable relationship with Asaro. At the end of the meeting, Rastelli told Vitale to take word to Asaro that he, Rastelli, said to leave Joe Marsala alone until Massino returned.

Vitale pulled up to a diner on Crossbay Boulevard to tell Vinny Asaro what Rastelli had said but Asaro became irate before Vitale could speak and began screaming at him. Asaro was particularly upset because he was a "goodfella" while Vitale wasn't, it being regarded as a violation of protocol for an associate to address a made member in matters relevant to the organization. Vitale told Asaro he respected his position but clarified that he was sent by Rastelli, the boss of the Family. Upon learning this, Asaro told Vitale that he should have shared that detail sooner and became more receptive. Ironically, Vinny Asaro was previously the target of Genovese captain Matty Ianniello’s ire when Asaro sent associates to meet with Ianniello regarding the sale of the Zaffaranos’ Pussycat Theater.

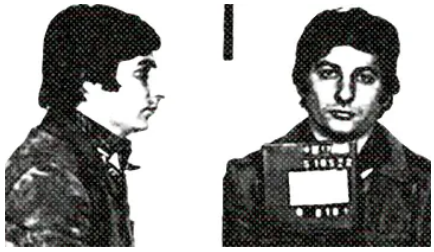

11 One thing you will also know from the evidence
12 presented in this case is that the defendant takes very
13 seriously knowing one's place in the mob. You heard from Sal
14 Vitale about the incident involving Joe Marsala, who was the
15 defendant's associate and then complained to Sal Vitale about
16 him and how he was treating Joe Marsala and how after that,
17 when Sal Vitale approached the defendant about the issue, the
18 defendant exploded on him. He was outraged that Sal Vitale,
19 who was just an associate at the time, had the audacity to
20 speak to the defendant about this issue. And the defendant
21 was made at the time.

Asaro stressed the importance of protocol during the Marsala dispute.

A similar conflict happened years earlier in the late 1970s shortly after Vinny Asaro had been made when Joseph “JoJo” Corozzo approached Asaro to settle a dispute involving a Corozzo associate. Though Corozzo became the Gambino Family *consigliere* many years later, he was not yet a member during the incident with Asaro and Vinny was outraged over an associate approaching him, much as he would be later with Vitale. This incident was the start of many years of bad blood between Asaro and affiliates of the Corozzo

crew. Asaro did have some positive relations with the Gambino Family, however. For example, Gambino associate Sal Polisi tipped Vinny Asaro off to a robbery score in the 1980s, Gary Valenti and Joe Bulger robbing the victim of around fifteen gold watches, which were then given to Asaro. Asaro never gave Valenti a cut of the earnings.

Around Christmas 1983, Vinny Asaro was at Valenti's home and asked him to bring him some of the Lufthansa Heist money that Frank Burke had previously given them, Asaro and Valenti having stored the money in Valenti's basement. Upon retrieval, Asaro became very upset when he found $80,000 instead of the $120,000 he expected. He accused Valenti of stealing $40k, but Valenti claimed he “only” took $20,000. Valenti had by this time built up a substantial collection of debts to other mafia figures, including an associate of Gambino member JoJo Corozzo. A sitdown was held between Corozzo and Asaro, where they learned that a Corozzo associate called "Joe Balls" owed Jerry Asaro the same amount Valenti owed to Corozzo’s other associate. To settle the issue, they swapped the loans so that "Balls" would pay Corozzo while Valenti would pay Jerry Asaro.



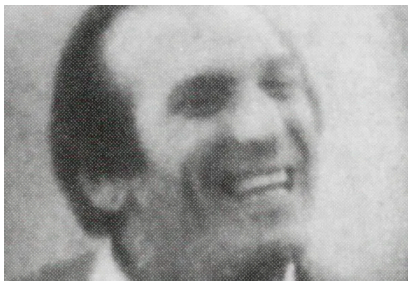
Asaro had numerous issues involving JoJo Corozzo (pictured).

Valenti also accumulated other debts to Vinny Asaro after developing a serious gambling addiction. One night Asaro told Valenti to meet him at the Astro Fence office in the middle of the night but Valenti didn't go, believing his cousin planned to kill him. Valenti fled to Las Vegas instead and stayed there gambling for around five months before returning to New York City. Back in New York, Valenti hid out at his mother's house to avoid Asaro. Burke associate Jimmy Santos eventually invited Valenti to go on a score that would help him repay his debts then Santos took Valenti to see Asaro, who greeted him warmly and invited him to go on the proposed score but insisted Valenti must still honor his debts. Vinny's son Jerry was cold to Valenti when he returned but Vinny scolded Jerry for behaving that way toward a cousin and Jerry relented by hugging Valenti.

The score in question was a robbery that had already been attempted by Lufthansa co-conspirator Daniel Rizzo, who Valenti confirmed was a made

Lucchese member by this time. The men intended to steal "gold salt", a white powder resembling laundry detergent made up of the same chemical components as gold. According to Valenti, when "gold salt" is mixed with cyanide and other poisons, it can be converted into actual bars of gold. Rizzo couldn't carry out the robbery successfully, so Santos, Valenti, Colombo soldier Dom Cataldo, and Cataldo associate Bobby Joyce took part. Cataldo was also in trouble over debts he owed.

The younger Jerry Asaro was supposed to participate as well, but he was replaced by Genovese member Alphonse “Funzi” Tarricone who also owed a substantial amount of money and needed to resolve his debts. Tarricone was included in Jerry’s place because of his status as a made member, the other participants feeling obligated to include him. Though Valenti identified Tarricone as a Colombo member on the stand and indeed Tarricone was close to Colombo members in the area, Valenti identified Tarricone with the Genovese Family in another account and other sources place Tarricone as a Genovese member. Vinny Asaro wasn't happy with Tarricone’s inclusion in the plot, as having both Jerry Asaro and Valenti involved meant Asaro would receive two "ends".



Tarricone was a Genovese member.

After committing the robbery, the "gold salt" was converted into gold and Valenti received almost $200,000, of which Vinny Asaro received half. Valenti believed the score netted a total of $2.2 million. Around the time of the above robbery, Vinny Asaro asked for an additional $5000 from Valenti so that he could give his captain Joe Massino a total of $10,000. Instead of paying off his own debts, Valenti used the robbery money to gamble and buy a house in Baldwin, Long Island.

Valenti continued to have gambling debts after the "gold salt" robbery and ended up losing his house. Regardless, Vinny Asaro proposed Valenti for membership along with his son Jerry in the 1980s, the Bonanno Family’s books having opened in 1984 for the first time since 1979 after Phil Rastelli finished serving another prison sentence. The proposed member list containing Valenti and Jerry Asaro’s names went around to the different Families and

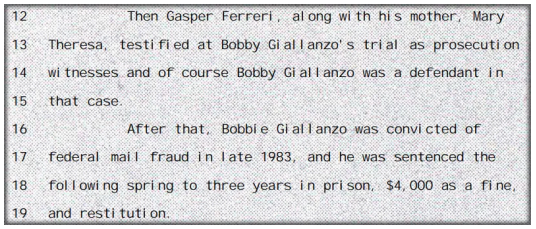
ended up with Matty Ianniello, the same Genovese captain who once rented space at Mickey Zaffarano's Pussycat Theater, though Ianniello was arrested shortly thereafter which stopped the list from circulating and halted the induction process.

Genovese member Ciro Perrone spoke to Valenti about the list on two occasions, first congratulating him on being proposed for membership, then to tell him about the situation with Ianniello and the list. Other information confirms Matty Ianniello was indicted in early 1985. The Bonanno Family's books were closed again, though, and Valenti was never inducted although Jerry Asaro did eventually get made.

More Asaro Drama

Cousin Gasper "Gary" Ferreri Sr. had once been close to some of the elder Jerry Asaro's one-time associates, particularly John Tagiliaferro who helped store some of the Lufthansa loot. Ferreri Sr. freqented Vinny Asaro's clubs and associated with the mafia to some degree but his son Gary Jr.'s involvement was even more peripheral. Ferreri Jr. did however assist Bobby Giallanzo in a boat insurance scam in the early 1980s and Valenti informed Asaro, who was upset at Giallanzo for using a relative in the scam. Ferreri Jr. told his mother about his involvement and she reported it to the local police, resulting in Bobby Giallanzo's arrest.

Bobby Giallanzo is the brother of current high-ranking member Ronnie Giallanzo and Bobby was once heavily involved in his uncle Vinny's activities but unlike Ronnie he has never been identified as a Bonanno member. Following an arrest in 1977, it was Vinny Asaro who visited the police precinct and took custody of Bobby Giallanzo's cash belongings. Both Gary Ferreri Jr. and his mother testified against Bobby Giallanzo in the 1983 insurance case and Giallanzo was convicted of federal mail fraud, receiving a three year sentence. Disturbed by the Ferreris' testimony, Vinny Asaro labeled the Ferreris "stool pigeons". His son Jerry even wanted to kill Ferreri Jr. but his father told him to cool down, Vinny explaining that Ferreri was still their cousin despite being a "rat" and recommended waiting to see what else came of it.


Then Gasper Ferreri, along with his mother, Mary Theresa, testified at Bobby Giallanzo's trial as prosecution witnesses and of course Bobby Giallanzo was a defendant in that case.

After that, Bobbie Giallanzo was convicted of federal mail fraud in late 1983, and he was sentenced the following spring to three years in prison, $4,000 as a fine, and restitution.

Ferreri Jr. testified against his own cousin in the late '70s.

Asaro and Gary Valenti encountered Gary Ferreri Jr. some time after this incident but did not speak with him. Jerry Asaro continued to push for Ferreri Jr.'s murder and Vinny warmed up to the idea, believing something had to be done. Valenti then reached out to Gary Ferreri Sr. and told him to get his son out of town. Valenti felt Ferreri Jr. would be killed and told his cousin "it's going to come through me," Valenti expecting he would be given the contract. Valenti testified that he warned the Ferreris because he felt incapable of killing someone, especially a cousin. Ferrari Sr. subsequently died of cancer and on his deathbed asked Valenti to speak with Vinny Asaro so that Asaro would protect Ferreri Jr. Nothing more appears to have come of the Ferreri situation.

Jerry Asaro and Valenti committed an armored truck robbery together one Halloween where they wore Halloween masks. This robbery was done with "Frankie Lap" LaPetina, a Gambino associate who owned the hunting lodge upstate with Jerry Asaro, and an associate of LaPetina's named "Jimmy". The robbery failed when a door to the truck was unexpectedly locked. Valenti avoided Vinny Asaro that night to avoid being verbally abused and when he saw him the next day Asaro told him, "You can't do nothing right." Vinny's son Jerry however disagreed with his father and sided with Valenti.

Jerry Asaro (L) occasionally took a stand against Vinny (R).

Valenti committed a half-successful robbery a short time later, again with Frank LaPetina and his associate Jimmy. They received a tip from "Billy Budd", the brother of Jimmy Santos, whose wife worked for a company that dealt in mink coats. The men believed they were robbing a trailer of mink coats but it turned out to be a "mixed load" of random low-end merchandise, not fur. Asaro was upset, telling Valenti he "screwed up" again.

Jerry Asaro and Gary Valenti were again tipped off by "Billy Budd", who told them about the owner of an auto parts store who would be picking up his payroll money from a certain bank. Valenti and Asaro then kidnapped a man at the bank who resembled the store owner and had a similar car but it ended up being the wrong person and the man they detained had no money. Valenti

reported this to Vinny Asaro at a Gambino social club and Asaro verbally abused Valenti in front of other “wiseguys”, including “Funzi”, likely Tarricone. Jerry Asaro then arrived, asking his father why he was "screaming like a maniac" and defended Valenti. Valenti walked home from the club and didn't speak to Vinny Asaro for a period of several months. When Valenti began communicating with Asaro again, Asaro had opened his restaurant "the Great In-Pasta" on Long Island and Valenti began working for his cousin as a bartender. Asaro and Valenti's loanshark customers also dropped off payments at the restaurant and it served as a headquarters for Vinny Asaro’s activities. Valenti estimates that Asaro's loansharking business earned around $4000 to $5000 each week.

Asaro had previously borrowed money from Jimmy Burke that he used for his own loan operation, though later Asaro was borrowing the money from Anthony Spero, a rising power in the Bonanno Family. Vinny Asaro once gave Valenti a $20,000 payment and instructed him to take it to Spero, but Valenti instead gambled it away and lied, saying he left the money with a random man in a brown coat who he’d encountered at Spero's Bensonhurst club. After telling Asaro the story, Spero and Asaro arranged for Valenti to visit Spero's Bath Beach club in an attempt to point out the individual he left the money with, who in actuality didn’t exist.

Spero operated out of Bath Beach.

Valenti hung out at Spero's club and pretended to keep an eye out but the accusation caused a stir with Spero’s associates and at one point someone came in and accused Valenti of lying. Valenti responded that it was none of the man’s business, not realizing he was speaking to Gambino leader Frank DeCicco. This places the incident before mid-April 1986 when DeCicco was murdered via car bomb by the Genovese and Lucchese Families in retaliation for the Paul Castellano murder in December 1985. It’s unclear exactly when the Spero situation occurred but DeCicco would have been a captain or the Gambino underboss at the time.

After Valenti returned from Spero's club, Vinny Asaro accused Valenti of lying and told him that Spero's people were looking to kill him, Asaro adding he should kill Valenti himself. Valenti however stuck to his manufactured story and the issue remained unresolved. Gary Valenti left New York after this infraction as he also owed money to brothers Robert and Vic Amuso of the Lucchese Family as well as Funzi Tarricone of the Genovese. Valenti again fled to Las Vegas, apparently telling Asaro a fake story about needing to go "on the lam" after committing a double murder related to a drug deal.

From Massino to Vitale

Gary Valenti, Sal Vitale, and Peter Zuccaro's random anecdotes about Vinny Asaro provide insight into his general activities and personal demeanor during the 1980s but a number of pivotal events occurred during Asaro's time with Joe Massino's crew. Massino was a central figure in the 1981 triple murder of rival captains Sonny Red Indelicato, Phil Giaccone, and Dominick Trinchera, then again in the murder of Sonny Black Napolitano later that year. The three murdered captains played a crucial role in the murder of Carmine Galante in 1979 and helped solidify Philip Rastelli as the true boss of the Bonanno Family but over the next two years the trio developed into their own rival faction that threatened the Rastelli regime, leading the remaining Rastelli loyalists and the Family's Sicilian faction to eliminate the three rival leaders. Napolitano's murder was due in part to fallout from Joe Pistone's undercover work as "Donnie Brasco", which was revealed in 1981, as well as suspicions that Napolitano was attempting to usurp control of the Family, a motivation confirmed in Joe Massino's testimony.

After the three captains were murdered, Massino was initially part of a ruling panel along with Bronx-based Montreal captain Gerlando Sciascia and acting boss Salvatore "Sally Fruits" Ferrugia but fled legal trouble stemming from the "Donnie Brasco" case and other pending charges by going on the lam to Pennsylvania, communicating primarily through brother-in-law Sal Vitale. Vitale was inducted into the Bonanno Family in the mid-1980s while Massino was still in hiding and also helped orchestrate the murder of Vinny Asaro's Castellammarese friend Cesare Bonventre that year. Vitale recalled being promoted to captain within six months to a year of his induction, Vitale replacing Massino who then became underboss, a title left vacant since Nicky Marangello was demoted in 1979 following Carmine Galante's murder.

Marangello was replaced five years after his demotion.

Vinny Asaro remained with the former Massino crew, serving as a soldier under Sal Vitale by the mid-1980s. Other members of the crew were taken in from Phil Giaccone's former *decina* and inducted, including Gasper Cammarata, Henry Bono, and Thomas DiFiore, as well as Russell Mauro, Anthony "Tony Green" Urso, Jimmy Galante, and former captain Sally Ferrugia. Though he didn't elaborate on the specific details, Vitale testified about one dispute involving Asaro that required higher-level mediation, the responsibility falling on Vitale. Vitale told Asaro he would handle it on his behalf due to Asaro's tendency to become hostile but after making this remark Asaro became so angry about Vitale's concerns that Vitale simply got up and left.

Vitale (pictured) became Asaro's captain in the mid-1980s.

Sal Vitale was born to immigrant parents from San Giuseppe Jato in Palermo province, a town with an immense mafia presence that was directly relevant to the Bonanno network dating back to the early 20th century and continuing into the 1980s. Newark-based Bonanno power Antonino Riela was from San Giuseppe Jato and Salvatore Maranzano had been close to Jatino leader Vincenzo Troia when the two men lived in Sicily then again after the men fled to the United States in the mid-1920s, Troia becoming a leader in Rockford then Newark prior to his 1935 murder. Other figures from San Giuseppe Jato and neighboring San Cipirello also joined or otherwise affiliated with the Bonannos throughout its history. In Vitale's case this was coincidental, as his association with Cosa Nostra came purely through his sister's marriage to Joe Massino, a fully "Americanized" member with Campanian heritage who in turn was recruited by the fellow Campanian Rastelli. Vitale's background fit well

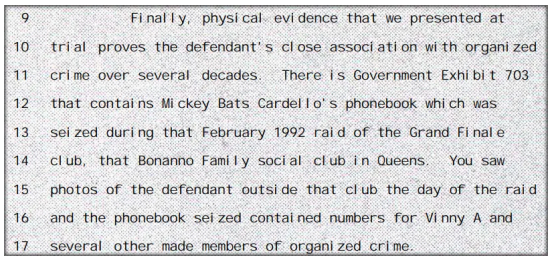
into the make-up of the historic Bonanno Family on paper but his route was roundabout.

When Phil Rastelli returned to prison in the mid-1980s the Family's powerbase increasingly went to a new generation of leadership. With Giaccone, Indelicato, Trinchera, Napolitano, and Bonventre deceased, other senior leaders aging out of their leadership positions, and former acting boss Sal Catalano facing significant legal trouble, Joe Massino became Rastelli's heir apparent although he too was incarcerated by 1986. During the late '80s and into the early '90s the Family was directed by a panel consisting of captains Sal Vitale and former Zaffarano member Louis Attanasio along with Anthony Spero, who was elected *consigliere*. Spero had heritage in Belmonte Mezzagno, Palermo province, a *comune* historically linked to the Gambino and Philadelphia Families although Spero is not known to have had any elder relatives in the mafia; the family's original name of Spera is an important name in the Belmonte Family in Sicily, however.

Like Vitale, Spero (pictured) had western Sicily ancestry.

When Bonanno associate Antonio "Boots" Tomasulo died in 1987, his son Anthony spoke to Michael "Mickey Bats" Cardello outside of Vinny Asaro's club and informed Cardello that the slot machine operation belonging to Boots would go to him, Anthony Tomasulo, and not the Bonanno Family. The younger Tomasulo also threatened Vitale during his conversation with Cardello. After Cardello reported this to Vitale, Vitale consulted with Anthony Spero, who told Vitale that "kids" like the younger Tomasulo were unpredictible due to cocaine use and warned that Tomasulo could "cop a sneak" and kill Vitale.

Spero was especially concerned as Vitale was the Family's only point of contact with Joe Massino in prison and as a result Vitale needed to be protected. For these reasons, the contract to murder the younger Tomasulo was given to Mickey Cardello, at this time an associate, and Cardello shot Tomasulo to death at Joe Cammarano Sr.'s social club. Cardello's phone book was obtained by law enforcement five years later during a 1992 social club raid and Vinny Asaro's phone number was among those contained in the book. Vinny himself was at the social club the day of the raid.


Finally, physical evidence that we presented at trial proves the defendant's close association with organized crime over several decades. There is Government Exhibit 703 that contains Mickey Bats Cardello's phonebook which was seized during that February 1992 raid of the Grand Finale club, that Bonanno Family social club in Queens. You saw photos of the defendant outside that club the day of the raid and the phonebook seized contained numbers for Vinny A and several other made members of organized crime.

Asaro associated with most Bonanno members in Queens and Brooklyn.

Sally Ferrugia was known to Sal Vitale as a Bonanno captain who once "ran the Family." Other sources confirm Ferrugia was a senior captain who served as acting boss in the early 1980s and worked closely with the Family's Sicilian faction, Ferrugia being born in Montaperto near the town of Agrigento. When he retired, his crew was merged with the Massino-Vitale crew. Ferrugia had a large bookmaking operation on Long Island run by an associate called "Stretch". When Ferrugia died in 1992, Asaro reached out to Vitale and told him about the operation, as it should fall under Vitale's control given Ferrugia had been a soldier in his crew. Vitale and Massino absorbed the operation and assigned Asaro to "service" the operation. After Vinny Asaro went to prison later in the 1990s, his son Jerry supervised "Stretch" and the former Ferrugia bookmaking operation. Jerry Asaro was by then a made member after being sponsored by his father in the early 1990s.

Gary Valenti testified that Sally Ferrugia once attempted to get a "loan" of $100,000 from Vinny Asaro after John Zaffarano sold the Pussycat Theater. Matty Ianniello and Asaro both received large payments from Zaffarano, as described earlier, but apparently Ferrugia sensed a similar opportunity for himself. Even though Ferrugia framed the request as a loan, Asaro suspected the Bonanno leader was simply shaking him down and refused to offer the money.

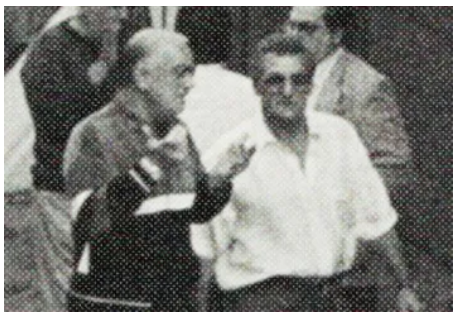
Ferrugia was the Family's former acting boss.

Rastelli's death behind bars in 1991 led to Massino's election as boss and he promoted Sal Vitale to underboss in the months following his own release from prison in late 1992. Gary Valenti believed Vinny Asaro was promoted to captain in the late 1980s or early 1990s, though Sal Vitale confirmed it was 1993, Asaro's promotion coinciding with Vitale's elevation to the

administration. During this period Asaro was forced to close his “Great In-Pasta” restaurant as he owed significant money to his Bonanno superiors and was struggling to maintain the establishment. Asaro also closed his old Triangle Social Club and opened a new club due to law enforcement heat at the previous location. Bonanno members who visited Asaro’s new club were Joe Massino, Sal Vitale, Louie DeCicco, Tony Urso, Anthony Spero, and Jimmy Galante.

A Family meeting was held at Asaro's new social club on one occasion and attended by 25 to 30 men who met outside. At this meeting Jimmy Galante told the attendees that Bonanno members were now required to pay $100 a month to fulfill their duty as members of the organization. Galante's position at the time wasn't stated but he previously served as an acting captain for Sal Vitale. It's not clear if Valenti attended the meeting itself, simply overheard it, or was told by Asaro, but Valenti understood the money would go to the boss to be used as a legal fund, or “war chest”, for members facing legal issues. An incensed Asaro said the Bonanno leadership was "playing kid's games" by requesting a monthly fee from made members.

After Vinny Asaro’s promotion to captain, Vitale recalled some of the members in Asaro's crew as Jerry Asaro, Antonino “Na Na” Bonventre, Giacomo “Jack” Bonventre, and Anthony “Elmont” Mannone, the latter a former Lucchese associate. The only Asaro associates Vitale could remember were "Johnny One Arm", not to be confused with “Ronnie One Arm” Trucchio, and Gary Valenti. Mannone once told Vitale that Asaro owed him money and the latter wanted to settle it by making Mannone a partner in Asaro's restaurant. Mannone however did not want to go into the restaurant business. Another member inducted during this period who was placed with Asaro was Vito Grimaldi, whose son Joseph would be made several years later and also joined the Asaro crew.



Mannone (L) was a member under Asaro (R).

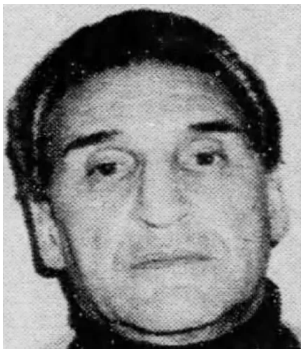
Tony Urso and Vincent Asaro were known by Vitale to be "very close" and the two of them hung out together around Ozone Park and at a nightclub in

Garden City. Tapped phone calls from the 1990s confirm Asaro and Urso's close relationship and both men were regularly surveilled at the same clubs. Urso was an "Americanized" member close to Joe Massino who like Asaro reported to Sal Vitale during the 1980s but became captain of a Queens crew that included remnants of the Family's Sicilian faction. Castellammare-born member Francesco Navarra was deceased but his sons were eventually inducted under Urso, bringing more Castellammaresi into the Family. Navarro's nephew Frank Fiordilino ended up on record with the Asaro crew as an associate of Vito Grimaldi.

The Rise of Jerry Asaro

Vinny Asaro's time as *capodecina* was derailed by an indictment in February 1995, accusing Asaro and a group of associates of running an extensive stolen car ring and "chop shop" operation dating back to 1993. The ring was directed by a mob associate named Gus Gralto who was initially operating independently but Gralto testified in the 2015 Asaro trial that Vinny repeatedly threatened and berated him in an effort to put Gralto on record which led to weekly payments of $400 per week in exchange for Asaro's protection. Asaro physically assaulted Gralto on one occasion and Asaro deliberately crashed his car into a fence owned by the chop shop operator.

After pulling away from Asaro temporarily by offering the mafioso a lump sum of $5000, Gralto was robbed, assaulted, and shot by associates of Gambino member Ronnie Trucchio. Gralto had initially tried to broker a partnership between Asaro and Trucchio but Asaro refused given he despised Trucchio and the Corozzo crew, Asaro noted earlier for trying to prevent Trucchio's induction into the Gambino Family and his earlier disputes with JoJo Corozzo. Trucchio apologized to Gralto and arranged for the return of some of his belongings but the incident prompted Gralto's return to the Asaro fold.



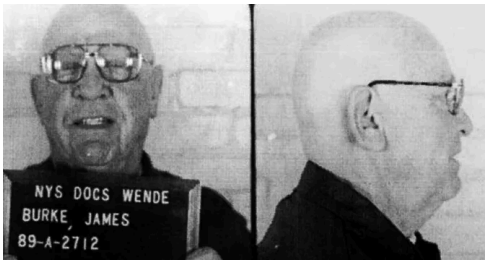
Asaro was at odds with the Gambino Family over Gus Gralto.

Vinny Asaro was then living in Ozone Park and Gralto understood that Asaro considered this neighborhood his "territory", expecting Gralto to carry out his

illegal operations with Asaro's approval. In addition to the automotive-related charges, the 1995 indictment included assault and weapons charges, investigators stating that the operation stretched from Brooklyn and Queens into Long Island. Asaro was linked to the ring by Guy Gralto himself, who volunteered to cooperate in the case.

Asaro's arrest didn't immediately deter his public association with Bonanno members. His daughter's marriage just a month later was held at the Gambino-affiliated "Russo's on the Bay" catering hall in Howard Beach and numerous Bonanno members attended, including Sal Vitale, Tony Urso, James Tartaglione, the Cammaranos, Vincent D'Antoni, and Vito Grimaldi. Two months later, Asaro attended the May 1995 wake for Bonanno member Henry "Chubby" Bono along with Vitale, Gerlando Sciascia, the Cammaranos, Thomas DiFiore, Generoso Barbieri, and others.

The initial indictment was subsequently dropped though the decision was reversed on appeal. The following year Asaro was surveilled at the 1996 wake for his old friend Jimmy Burke, who died while incarcerated for the Richard Eaton murder, Eaton being the victim whose body was left in an abandoned truck trailer in "the Hole". The Asaros maintained their close relationship to Burke even in the years before his death, Vinny visiting Burke in prison once in 1993 and Jerry Asaro visiting his confirmation sponsor on three separate occasions.



The Asaros maintained contact with Burke (pictured) until his death.

Asaro remained free for several years despite the indictment looming over him and attended the 1997 funeral for Baldo Amato's father in Brooklyn alongside Vitale and other Bonanno leaders. While awaiting trial on the stolen car ring charges, Asaro was also hit with forgery charges after it was discovered he used a fake birthday and address on his driver's license application, his license having been previously suspended in 1983 due to a drunk driving charge. He was convicted and sentenced to six months for the forgery charge in early 1998 but sentencing was suspended due to the auto theft trial due to take place that year.

Vinny Asaro was ultimately convicted of “enterprise corruption, criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree and offering a false instrument to file” in November 1998 and was sentenced to two terms of four to twelve years and another for 28 months to seven years. Asaro initially named his son Jerry as the acting *capodecina* during his incarceration but the Family administration demoted Vinny after a time due to numerous complaints about the elder Asaro mistreating and “robbing” the members under him. His friend Tony Urso was recorded in 2003 commenting that Asaro was frequently broke and when a broke member is promoted to captain he inevitably abuses his men.

Jerry Asaro replaced his father as an official captain though after Vinny’s release in 2003 he may not have been a member of his son’s crew. Bad blood already existed between the father and son as Jerry never visited Vinny in prison to discuss the demotion and instead Jack Bonventre carried the news to the elder Asaro. The same 2003 tape where Tony Urso spoke about Asaro, this being a confidential recording made by cooperating Bonanno captain James Tartaglione, included additional discussion of Vinny Asaro in the months after his release from prison. Urso, Tartaglione, and fellow leaders Vincent Basciano and Joe Cammarano Sr. highlighted Asaro’s poor financial condition, cirrhosis of the liver, unpaid debts, and gambling addiction but they were unsure where exactly Asaro would sit organizationally. Cammarano, a captain on the Family’s ruling panel, indicated that Asaro could end up assigned to him.

Tartaglione (L) & Urso (R) discussed Asaro’s return to the streets in 2003.

Tony Urso stated he would encourage Asaro to pay off some of his outstanding debts, the first being a $16,000 owed to “Vito”, likely Vito Grimaldi. The men also criticized Vinny Asaro for refusing to kick in $25 per week to the Family’s “war chest”, drawing back to Gary Valenti’s story about an outraged Asaro fuming outside of his social club when the “chest” was first introduced. Valenti stated that the Family expected $100 per month from each member which is confirmed by the 2003 leaderships’ comments about members paying $25 per week. Though Asaro’s complaints about the “war chest” were a matter of principal, the acting leadership in 2003 felt it

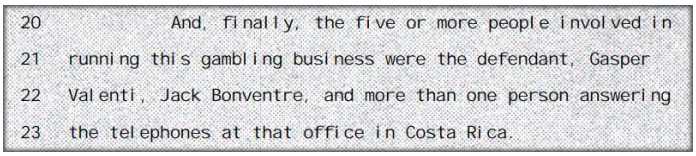
reflected poorly on any member in good health who couldn't or wouldn't contribute to the fund.

Gary Valenti returned from Nevada around 2005 or 2006 after having spent around fifteen years living primarily in Las Vegas. Valenti worked in a casino and engaged in petty crime but through his Las Vegas-based cousin Tommy Ferreri he also worked as a limousine driver who escorted celebrities and athletes to events. Ferreri, who was originally from the Brooklyn-Queens area, was a made member of the Bonanno Family by the time Valenti returned to New York and served as a West Coast contact for his relatives who remained in New York. Other Asaro relatives and close associates were inducted into the Bonannos during the late '90s and early 2000s, including Ronnie Giallanzo and Sandro Aiosa. Ferreri's name was included on a proposed member list indicating he was inducted around 2002.

Aiosa (L) & Vito Grimaldi (R) continued to associate with Asaro.

In Las Vegas, Gary Valenti was unsurprisingly plagued with troubles. He associated with both an FBI informant and an undercover FBI agent, being arrested for fraud and sentenced to eight months in prison. A mistress he was involved with in Vegas also sued him for money he'd stolen from her. He was largely out of the loop when it came to the Asaros and the broader Bonanno Family but much later, during Valenti's cooperation, Vinny Asaro commented that he'd once warned Valenti about an associate in Las Vegas named Anthony Perry, indicating there was contact between the cousins.

Despite his return to the old Ozone Park neighborhood, Gary Valenti did not immediately resume a close relationship with the Asaros. He had sporadic contact with Vinny during his initial years back in New York but the most substantial connection he made was with Jack Bonventre, the acting captain of Jerry Asaro's *decina*. With Vinny Asaro's assistance, Valenti dabbled in a Costa Rican sportsbook headed by Bonventre circa 2006 or 2007 but after taking on a bettor who refused to pay his losses, Valenti was excluded from the operation. Later attempts by Valenti to involve himself in the operation were dismissed by Bonventre, who claimed the sportsbook was dwindling and simply didn't have room for another agent.

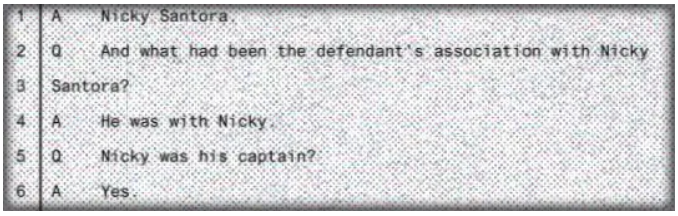

And, finally, the five or more people involved in running this gambling business were the defendant, Casper Valenti, Jack Bonventre, and more than one person answering the telephones at that office in Costa Rica.

Valenti tried to include himself in Bonventre's gambling business.

During this period the Asaros sold a Carvel Ice Cream franchise they owned and reportedly netted $300,000, the purchase going to two affiliates of the Gambino Family. This was a point of contention between Vinny and his son Jerry as they were 50/50 partners in the store and Vinny later told Valenti that Jerry Asaro had only invested around $16k in the business. When the Carvel shop was sold, Jerry gave Vinny $100k rather than the full 50% Vinny felt he was owed.

Between the early- and mid-2000s, the Bonanno leadership was decimated by RICO indictments and the mass-cooperation of many Family leaders and other associates, culminating in the cooperation of underboss Sal Vitale and boss Joe Massino, Vinny Asaro's former captains. Murder cases were contributing causes, including the murder of the three Bonanno captains in 1981, the Sonny Black Napolitano murder that same year, the 1984 murder of Cesare Bonventre, and finally the 1999 murder of Bronx-based Montreal captain Gerlando Sciascia, among others. Jerry Asaro assisted with the Sciascia killing by disposing of the vehicle used in the Sicilian's murder. Though Vitale and Massino had extensive knowledge of Vinny Asaro's historic activities, Asaro escaped charges but his son Jerry, now an active Family leader, was indicted in 2007.

It's unclear if Vinny Asaro did report to the Cammarano crew for a time after his release in 2003 but some accounts suggest he belonged to son Jerry Asaro's *decina* for a time. However, by the end of the decade he reported to *capodecina* Nicholas "Nicky" Santora. Santora is well-known primarily for his involvement in the "Donnie Brasco" case of the early 1980s but wasn't inducted into the Bonanno Family until the mid-1990s. Santora and Asaro did have a degree of history, though, as Santora was once an associate on record with the Mickey Zaffarano crew during the 1970s, Santora's former captain "Sonny Black" Napolitano once serving as soldier in the crew.


A Nicky Santora.
Q And what had been the defendant's association with Nicky Santora?
A He was with Nicky.
Q Nicky was his captain?
A Yes.

Asaro reported to Santora for part of the 2000s.

The mid-to-late 2000s was naturally a tumultous period in the Bonanno Family. With Joe Massino and the acting leadership incarcerated, the acting boss position temporarily fell on Bronx captain Vinnie Basciano in 2004 but his arrest later that year led to fellow Bronx-based member Michael Mancuso taking control of the Family. Mancuso was in turn arrested in early 2006 and the acting boss became Salvatore Montagna, a young Castellammarese mafioso born in Montreal who previously associated with Gerlando Sciascia but reported to the Bronx crew despite operating primarily in Queens and Long Island. Though the Family's historic Sicilian faction was diminished, Montagna had close ties to the Sicilian mafia in Castellammare del Golfo and a number of other young Sicilian members became more active in Family affairs during his leadership. Basciano and Mancuso cultivated their own factions and vied for power in the Family, Basciano loyalist Dominick Cicale recalling that Montagna was aligned with Mancuso.

Montagna's administrative duties were helped by acting underboss Nicky Santora and acting *consigliere* Anthony Rabito, another former Zaffarano crew member. The public was made aware of boss Joe Massino's cooperation in 2005 and the disgraced Bonanno Family was without an official boss. Despite Michael Mancuso not yet holding the title, available information suggests Montagna, Santora, and Rabito were acting in Mancuso's interest and helping solidify his powerbase despite the former acting boss's incarceration on RICO charges. Santora and Rabito were indicted in 2007 and incarcerated until 2009, Montagna also being deported to Canada that year. Jerry Asaro was arrested with Santora and Rabito in the 2007 case and ultimately served several years in prison after his 2008 conviction.

Other names surfaced as acting leaders or ruling panel members during the late 2000s but the Family was still reeling from the unprecedented collapse of its administrative structure that began at the start of the decade and continued as other members began to cooperate. Insight into Vinny Asaro's exact role during this time is limited as he and Gary Valenti ceased contact with one another for approximately two years during this time, the wounds of their earlier issues unhealed. Their relationship would resume in full at the start of the following decade.

Vinny Asaro's Return to Power

In January of 2010, Vinny Asaro's name was suddenly relevant. Jerry Capeci reported in *Gangland News* that Asaro was being supported by Nicky Santora and Tony Rabito as a contender for the official boss position of the Bonanno Family. Capeci added that Asaro was viewed as a respected senior figure among the Bonanno Family's so-called Sicilian faction along with Vito

Grimaldi, noting that Asaro was fond of using Sicilian phrases. Later that year, however, Vincent Badalamenti, previously the acting *consigliere*, was said to be running the Family alongside Santora and Rabito. The Brooklyn-based Badalamenti presumably has Sicilian heritage based on his last name though no information has surfaced suggesting this is relevant to his place in the Bonanno Family.

Badalamenti assumed a leadership role in the 2010s.

Gary Valenti had by then repaired his relationship with Vinny and was actively informing on his cousin to the FBI. Unprompted by legal trouble, Valenti had contacted the FBI in late 2008 and offered to cooperate against the mafia, his relation to Asaro a key factor in the FBI's interest toward the otherwise obscure and low-level Valenti. Though he soon began recording meetings with Jack Bonventre and phone calls with cousin Tommy Ferreri, Valenti's estranged relationship to Asaro made it difficult to capture him, Asaro sometimes communicating with Valenti through a middleman. Valenti was however able to entice Asaro back into his good graces with a familiar cash grab: the sale of a relative's real estate property in 2010.

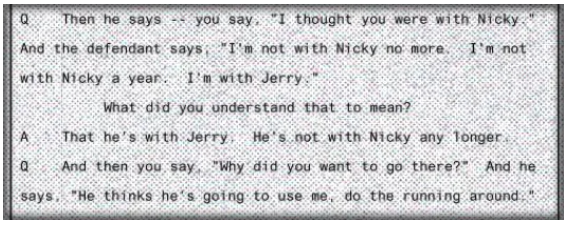
An older relative from the Valenti branch of the family had died and a younger relative was selling the home, inspiring Asaro to scheme with Valenti about ways to get a piece of the sale, bringing to mind Asaro's earlier meddling in the Zaffaranos' sale of the Pussycat Theater. This scheme was much smaller than the hundreds of thousands Asaro received from John Zaffarano but as a desperate gambler Asaro was willing to accept a smaller sum. Asaro initially received $3000 and gave $500 to Valenti, Asaro telling Valenti he was eager to receive the payment so he could bet on horses. Asaro and Valenti were also able to extract more cash from the sale at a later date.

After resuming their relationship in the early 2010s, Vinny Asaro told Valenti about a recent confrontation he had with Gambino figures outside of captain Dominick Pizzonia's club where Asaro threatened to rip a nearby fence down in an effort to demonstrate that the Gambinos weren't the only mafia group in the neighborhood. He was also involved in another altercation at a car wash owned by Gambino member Vincenzo Frogiero that resulted in a Gambino

associate named “Frankie” accusing Asaro of having choked him. Asaro denied the accusation and met with Gambino captain Caesar Gurino to discuss the matter but it was evident that Asaro was still involved in constant squabbles with the Gambinos. Asaro was also involved in a loansharking dispute that culminated in a sitdown with Gambino member Blaise Corozzo, a brother of Nick and JoJo, that prompted Asaro to contact acting leader Lenny DiMaria for further mediation.

DiMaria is a leader of the Gambino Corozzo faction.

Though he’d previously belonged to Nicky Santora’s crew as of 2009, Asaro told Valenti he requested a transfer to his son Jerry’s crew and the transfer was “already done”, meaning Asaro was now under the direction of Jerry Asaro. The new Family leadership was looking to take Vinny away from Jerry Asaro and put him direct with the administration, however, but it’s not clear if this ever occurred. Asaro was becoming more comfortable with Valenti by this time and starting to share more insight into Bonanno politics, much of which was caught on Valenti’s recorder.



Q Then he says -- you say, "I thought you were with Nicky." And the defendant says, "I'm not with Nicky no more. I'm not with Nicky a year. I'm with Jerry."

What did you understand that to mean?

A That he's with Jerry. He's not with Nicky any longer.

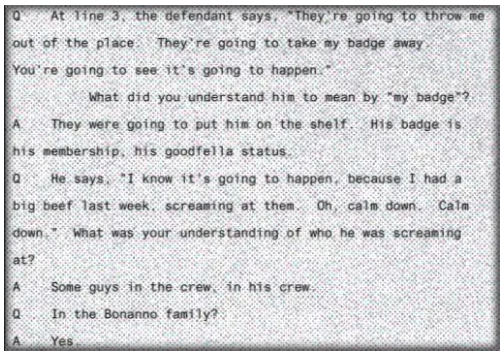
Q And then you say, "Why did you want to go there?" And he says, "He thinks he's going to use me, do the running around."

Asaro transferred from the Santora crew back to his son Jerry.

Jerry Asaro was back on the street by late 2010 following the 2007 RICO case but had several years of parole remaining and thus kept his contacts limited, continuing to direct his crew through Jack Bonventre. Vinny Asaro was incensed, claming Jerry “lost his mind”, as the son had yet to contact his father following his release. Vinny was perpetually jealous of Jerry Asaro’s money-making ability and accused him of greed, the father complaining that the Family leadership authorized Vinny to take out a $5000 loan from his son but Jerry refused. Jerry Asaro was at this time in charge of the Family’s loansharking book which is why the leadership had to approve Vinny’s

request. Rather than coercing his son into issuing the loan by citing the leadership's approval, Vinny bitterly accepted his son's refusal. Jerry Asaro was hit with a parole violation in 2011 after Bonanno members attended his daughter's wedding and he was then sent back to prison. Jerry was working for Nassau Ready-Mix at the time, a concrete business on Long Island.

Despite Jerry Capeci hyping Vinny Asaro as a contender for Bonanno boss in early 2010, Gary Valenti's recordings some time later show that Vinny was unsure of his status in the Family. Asaro told Valenti he was going to be "thrown out" and have his "badge" taken away, meaning he expected to be shelved. Asaro told Valenti he had a "big beef" the previous week that resulted in Asaro screaming at members of the Bonanno Family and he fully expected to be reprimanded. He also commented that several Bonanno captains had recently lost their positions.


Q At line 3, the defendant says, "They're going to throw me out of the place. They're going to take my badge away. You're going to see it's going to happen."
What did you understand him to mean by "my badge"?
A They were going to put him on the shelf. His badge is his membership, his goodfella status.
Q He says, "I know it's going to happen, because I had a big beef last week, screaming at them. Oh, calm down. Calm down." What was your understanding of who he was screaming at?
A Some guys in the crew, in his crew.
Q In the Bonanno family?
A Yes.

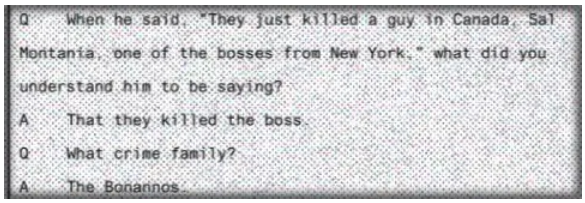
Asaro told Valenti he expected to be shelved after one particular tirade.

Valenti attempted to sell ostensibly stolen eletronics to various local figures during his FBI cooperation but the electronics were in fact given to him by his handlers to ensnare mafiosi. Asaro commented that nobody was interested in Valenti's "stolen" wares because of alarms and tracking devices on modern electronics. Valenti testified how in the 1970s he and Asaro similarly sold stolen electronics but filled the boxes with concrete to simulate weight then quickly left the scene before buyers discovered the ruse.

Though still only a soldier, Vinny began telling Valenti about all of the "running around" he was doing on behalf of the Bonanno Family, particularly his son's crew. Jack Bonventre was the acting captain but maintained a circumspect approach and though Bonventre's influence was evident throughout Gary Valenti's cooperation, it appears Jerry Asaro and Bonventre encouraged Vinny Asaro to attend sitdowns and involve himself with the crew's politics on their behalf. This could have been done in part to satisfy the elder mafioso's aggressive ego but Vinny Asaro was said by Valenti to have a thorough understanding of Cosa Nostra's rules and axioms which may have

been one reason the younger members utilized him regardless of his chaotic emotional state.

In November 2011, Gary Valenti was instructed to drive Vinny Asaro to Jack Bonventre's place of business as Sal Montagna had been murdered in Canada and Asaro planned to meet with Bonventre to discuss it; Asaro told Valenti that Montagna was "one of the bosses from New York." After arriving, Asaro met with Jack Bonventre and his father "NaNa" outside of the business before Asaro returned to the car. Valenti prodded Asaro for insight into Canadian affairs but Asaro pleaded ignorance, adding that he had no idea what was going on within their own Ozone Park neighborhood let alone Montreal.


Q When he said, "They just killed a guy in Canada, Sal Montania, one of the bosses from New York," what did you understand him to be saying?
A That they killed the boss.
Q What crime family?
A The Bonannos.

Asaro referred to Montagna as "one of the bosses" of the Bonanno Family.

Other coverage revealed that Montagna attempted a reorganization effort during his time in Montreal that provoked a full-on war and countless murders, including that of Nicolo Rizzuto from the 1970s dispute mediated by Mickey Zaffarano, culminating in Montagna's own high-profile murder on the banks of a snowy Quebec creek. One faction of the Montreal *decina* aligned with Montagna while others sided with Rizzuto after Montagna attempted to unseat the rebellious Rizzuto from power but the war splintered the Montreal organized crime landscape into a confusing and violent mess. Among Montagna's supporters were the Arcuri brothers, whose father Domenico was an earlier suspected Montreal member, it being noted earlier that another older relative of the Arcuris, Rosario, had killed Nicolo Rizzuto's father in New York City in the 1930s.

The degree that the Bonanno leadership endorsed Montagna's actions is unknown but the young Castellammarese mafia leader was a liaison between the Bonanno Family's New York and Montreal branches prior to his deportation and the attempted restructuring in Montreal was undoubtedly being done in the Bonanno name, much as Montagna's *compaesano* Carmine Galante successfully did the same during the 1950s. Taped recordings made by cooperating boss Joe Massino made vague reference to Sal Montagna's contact with Montreal years earlier, confirming Montagna and therefore the Bonanno Family was still in contact with the aloof Canadian group to some degree during the mid-2000s. Bronx captain and government witness Dominick Cicale has also claimed that the Montreal crew continued to pay

tribute to the Bonanno Family and engage in drug trafficking with their New York confederates when Vinnie Basciano served as acting boss. Despite rumors that Montreal had broken off from the Bonanno Family, there is no information confirming that this officially took place, a new Family needing formal recognition even though Montreal's de facto "organization" is formidable and semi-autonomous much as they were in the Cotroni era when Joseph Asaro lived there.

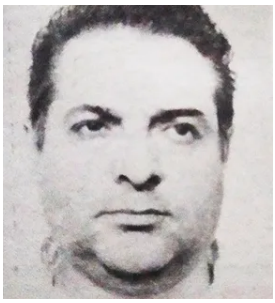
Some accounts suggest the Rizzuto faction severed ties with the Bonanno Family after the 1999 murder of their townsman Gerlando Sciascia but Sal Vitale testified that he visited Montreal in 2001 where he attended a meeting with the membership to discuss Sciascia's replacement. Sciascia's acting *capodecina* Vito Rizzuto, Nicolo's son, turned down the promotion in favor of his father, though Vitale said a promotion was not finalized at this time. In another account, however, Vitale confirmed that Nicolo Rizzuto eventually became the new captain. Sciascia's murder itself is controversial as Bonanno witnesses initially claimed he was murdered for disparaging Bonanno captain Anthony Graziano but Joe Massino testified that Sciascia was ultimately killed for ordering the unsanctioned murder of member Frank Cotroni's son.

Regardless, Sal Montagna was born in Montreal and his earlier association with Sciascia provided him with strong links to the area. Montagna was sponsored into the Bonanno Family by his *compaesano* Baldo Amato in the 1990s and Amato himself had a close, long-term relationship to Sciascia and Montreal. Though the Rizzutos were at odds with the Bonanno leadership, the Montreal war showed that some affiliates of the Montreal group aligned themselves with Montagna, these men likely being members or associates of the Bonanno Family who no doubt still depended on the Bonanno name for formal recognition within the mafia system. A shocking number of murders occurred in Montreal on both sides of the conflict during the 2010s, however, and with Montagna deceased it's not evident what remains of the official crew even though it remains part of the broader mafia network.

Asaro discussed the murder of Montagna (pictured) in Montreal.

Several years later, Project Otremens in Ontario revealed that the Bonanno Family inducted a former New York associate who had moved to Hamilton where he associated closely with Paolo Violi's sons, Domenico and Giuseppe, the former being inducted and promoted to underboss of the Buffalo Family during this period. The new Bonanno initiate was an informant and reported that Giuseppe Violi was given the option of being inducted into either the Buffalo or Bonanno Families. Domenico Violi also offered to introduce several well-known Montreal figures to the informant, one of them a son of Frank Cotroni, though it was not stated whether the three men he named were Bonanno members and the informant himself belonged to a New York-based *decina*.

At least one of the men mentioned by Violi, Francesco Arcadi, was likely initiated into the Bonanno Family during the Rizzuto era though he is Calabrian with longstanding ties to the Cotronis and Violis and the majority of the Montreal Bonanno membership has never been confirmed by member sources, past or present. The implication is that remnants of the old Cotroni-Violi element in Montreal may still represent the Bonanno Family in Montreal, at least in formal terms, although Vito Rizzuto's son Leonardo is said to represent a distinct group in Montreal and it's unknown how these relationships fit together today. There is no evidence the New York-based leadership is connected to the current Montreal landscape but survivors of the conflict do represent the crew's historic relationships and the Bonanno Family has maintained Canadian connections of some sort as evidenced by Project Otremens.



Paolo Violi's (pictured) sons and former associates are still active.

Family leaders Vinny Badalamenti and Nicky Santora were arrested in January 2012 and members continued to cooperate. Bonanno sources identified Giuseppe Bosco, a young Castellammarese figure like Montagna, as one of the acting leaders during this period but his name did not come up in available testimony or transcripts from Gary Valenti's cooperation. Frank Fiordilino knew Bosco and stated that the Boscos of the modern Castellammare Family are relatives of the Bonanno member. Girolamo Asaro's wife Giuseppa Sarcona

descended from a branch of Boscos as well and the Castellammarese Boscos in early Detroit were discussed earlier, it being unknown if any continuity exists between these historic Boscos and those active in recent decades. Giuseppe Bosco was shelved for unknown reasons after helping direct the Family, a rumor confirmed by Fiordilino and Lucchese cooperating witness John Pennisi.

Asaro didn't comment on the imprisoned Michael Mancuso's status during his conversations with Valenti, but information from other Bonanno sources have indicated that Badalamenti, Santora, Rabito, and other Family leaders were running the Family on behalf of Mancuso. John Pennisi confirmed that the Lucchese Family never recognized Mancuso as official boss throughout most of the 2010s but there is no indication anyone else held the title either. It does appear that despite his incarceration, Mancuso's brief run as acting boss in 2005-2006 solidified a faction of loyalists who acknowledged his de facto influence from prison and secured his election as official boss in subsequent years.

Mancuso's (pictured) name was noticeably absent on Valenti's recordings.

Later that year, in August, Vinny Asaro would partially redeem Jerry Capeci's 2010 report by informing Gary Valenti that he, Asaro, was now a *capodecina* and a member of the ruling panel. Asaro had no members under him initially but later told Valenti he either already had or would soon have soldiers assigned to him. Asaro also told Valenti that a "new boss" had been chosen: Thomas DiFiore. Once an associate of murdered captain Phil Giaccone, DiFiore had also been a member of Sal Vitale's *decina* alongside Asaro in the 1980s. Despite this, Asaro did not seem particularly familiar with nor fond of DiFiore. There were DiFiores related to the Family's early Santa Ninfa element and Tommy DiFiore did have an early history in the same neighborhoods which could suggest he's another leading figure with heritage there.

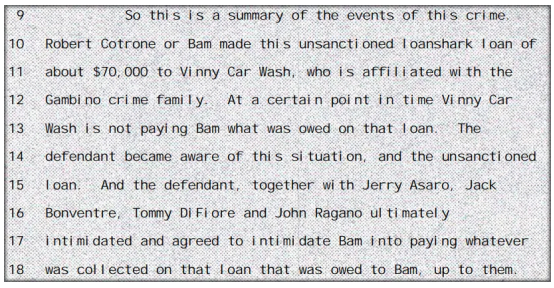
Asaro and Valenti spoke somewhat casually about the mafia's formal ranks. *Capodecina* or even "captain" was replaced with "skipper". "Boss" was used somewhat liberally in that neither official nor acting were clarified and Valenti himself sometimes used "bosses" to refer to the entire administration. Asaro

would have known these distinctions but despite his openness about the mafia's inner-workings he spoke to Valenti in relative generalities. Tommy DiFiore as the "new boss" or Sal Montagna as "one of the bosses" were references to the acting boss position, not an official title.

Tommy DiFiore attempted his own restructuring of the Family leadership and offered the *consigliere* position to both Jack Bonventre and Vinny Asaro. Bonventre turned it down, saying he wanted to remain close to Jerry Asaro, while Vinny also balked, having no interest in the added obligation. Asaro told Valenti too that DiFiore planned to have a meeting of Family leaders where they'd vote to demote several incarcerated captains but Asaro protested, arguing the leadership should wait until the captains come home before busting them down to soldier. This had happened to Asaro himself when he went to prison in the late 1990s and he felt incarcerated captains should have a right to defend themselves on the street before facing demotion.

The Asaros also requested Tommy DiFiore's assistance with a financial score after becoming acting boss. Gambino member Vincenzo Frogiero, whose carwash was the site of multiple confronations with Vinny Asaro, had borrowed $70k from a major loanshark and Asaro associate named Robert "Bam" Cotrone and refused to pay. The ongoing dispute was a major preoccupation for Vinny Asaro in many of his conversations with Valenti and his own attempts to collect money from Frogione were fruitless. He hoped Frogione, a native of Italy, would get deported. Frogione's associate "Frankie" was involved in the loan dispute as well and Asaro regularly raged about "Vinnie Car Wash" and "Frankie" on the recordings captured by Gary Valenti.

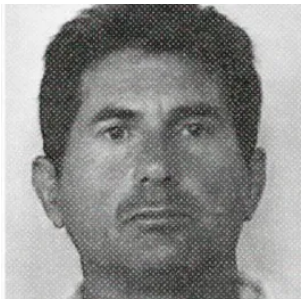
As the new acting boss, Tommy DiFiore was able to settle the issue and collect $30,000 from the Gambino Family, which was to be divided between DiFiore, Asaro, Bonventre, and Jerry Asaro. Though the dispute was now resolved, Vinny Asaro complained to Valenti that DiFiore requested half of the $30k and was attempting to take even more from Asaro. DiFiore justified his take by telling Asaro that it was because of the Bonanno leadership that they were able to collect any money from Frogione at all.



So this is a summary of the events of this crime. Robert Cotrone or Bam made this unsanctioned loanshark loan of about $70,000 to Vinny Car Wash, who is affiliated with the Gambino crime family. At a certain point in time Vinny Car Wash is not paying Bam what was owed on that loan. The defendant became aware of this situation, and the unsanctioned loan. And the defendant, together with Jerry Asaro, Jack Bonventre, Tommy DiFiore and John Ragano ultimately intimidated and agreed to intimidate Bam into paying whatever was collected on that loan that was owed to Bam, up to them.

DiFiore assisted with retrieving an unpaid loan from the Gambinos.

By the spring and summer of 2013, Jerry Capeci was reporting that Tommy DiFiore was the acting boss for Michael Mancuso. In one of these articles from April, Capeci identified not only DiFiore but also Vinny Asaro and "former *consigliere*" Tony Rabito as the acting leadership on behalf of Mancuso and Vincent Badalamenti. 2013 FBI surveillance of a Bonanno social club in Queens captured Vinny Asaro with NYC-based Sicilian mafia figure Sergio Gucciardi who has been connected by Italian authorities to the mafia in Sciacca and Castellammare del Golfo, Gucciardi himself from Sciacca and affiliated with then-boss Accursio Dimino, the latter sharing his name with an early Gambino captain of the same name who also descended from Sciacca. With Asaro and Gucciardi were Tommy DiFiore, captain John Sciremammano, and member John Spirito Jr., the latter a relatively new made member and the son of a powerful Bronx-based member then incarcerated. Both Sciremammano and Spirito Jr. are known Mancuso loyalists, Spirito's father John Sr. recently identified as the Family's current underboss in the Mancuso administration. Accursio DiMino has also been noted by Italian investigators for his ties to the modern Gambino Family.

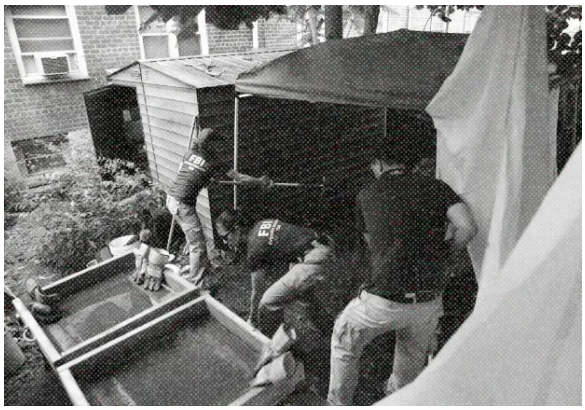


Asaro was seen with an associate of Accursio Dimino (pictured).

Unfortunately our insight into the organization's internal politics dried up in mid-2013. Valenti already having told the FBI everything he knew about past crimes, in June of 2013 authorities decided to dig up the basement of the Burke-owned home in Ozone Park where Paul Katz was once buried. Katz's body had been removed by Valenti and Jerry Asaro in the 1980s but the FBI still found bone fragments, clothing, and circumstantial evidence that corroborated Valenti's claims. While the dig was underway, Valenti met with Asaro in a vehicle and the informant told his cousin about the police presence at the Liberty Avenue residence. Asaro initially thought the "Liberty Avenue" location being referred to was Bam Cotrone's auto repair business but Valenti made a vague allusion that confirmed it was the former Katz burial location.

Vinny Asaro's response was cold and distant, likely recognizing not only the gravity of the situation but what it implied. Gary Valenti was once told by his uncle Jerry Asaro, Vinny's father, that the only people who knew about Katz's

burial were Jerry, Vinny, Paul Vario, and Jimmy Burke. The younger Jerry Asaro learned of it when he assisted Valenti in retrieving the skeleton many years later but the elder Jerry Asaro, Vario, and Burke were all deceased by 2013, leaving only Vinny Asaro, his son Jerry, and Gary Valenti as living conspirators who knew about the burial location. Vinny, likely realizing Valenti was the informant, claimed not to know what Valenti was telling him and instructed his cousin not to call him before the two men departed.



The dig at the Katz burial site ended Valenti and Asaro's relationship

After leaving Valenti, Vinny Asaro drove to Bam Cotrone's auto shop where he was then driven by one of his associates past the site of the dig. He returned to his own car and drove to Nassau Ready-Mix where he met with his son Jerry for a short time. While driving around after the Valenti bombshell, Asaro accidentally drove into a pole and damaged his vehicle. Vinny Asaro, Tommy DiFiore, Jerry Asaro, Jack Bonventre, and John Ragano were subsequently indicted the following January based on Gary Valenti's cooperation, the RICO case including current extortion charges but also historic crimes like the Katz murder for both Asaros and even the Lufthansa Heist for Vinny Asaro. All of the defendants except Vinny Asaro negotiated guilty pleas to specific charges while the elder Asaro, ever the fighter, stood trial in 2015.

Much of the information contained in these sections on Vinny Asaro comes from trial transcripts that have already been outlined in detail so the trial itself will be touched upon with brevity. Gary Valenti was the star witness but Sal Vitale, Peter Zuccaro, and Anthony Ruggiano Jr. all made appearances, the latter three men knowing Asaro since the 1970s. Ruggiano Jr. testified during the trial how around the time of Asaro's induction into the Bonanno Family his father told him that Vinny was a third generation member, Ruggiano Sr. obviously familiar with "Don Vincenzo".

Vincenzo Asaro was well-known around Ozone Park.

In a somewhat surprising turn, Vinny Asaro was fully acquitted of all charges in November 2015. Perhaps the lying, thieving Gary Valenti was deemed unreliable by the jury although from my view as a researcher Valenti provided generally reliable information with many points of corroboration, at least where it concerns my interests. Outside of Gary Ferreri Jr.'s mild testimony in Bobby Giallano's boat scam decades earlier, Gary Valenti is the only known Asaro relative to became an informant or cooperating witness across all known generations of the clan and report in-depth about the mafia activities of his relatives. Valenti's personal flaws aside, he provided invaluable insight into Vinny Asaro's background and the inner workings of the Asaro crew even if it wasn't enough to convict his elderly cousin. His account provides an excellent bookend to the story of Girolamo Asaro as it compares and contrasts with the lives of his descendants, especially Vinny's life as a Sicilian-American mafioso in New York.

Vinny Asaro's Other Grievances & Antics

Most anecdotes from cooperating witnesses as well as Asaro's taped self-admissions show him to be in a state of constant stress and prone to outlandish acts of rage seemingly on a daily basis. Much of the latter half of this article has already outlined historic examples of his antics but Gary Valenti's cooperation proved this behavior continued unabated into Asaro's senior years. Not only did he continue to skirmish with other members and associates, he was an opinionated and critical voice when it came to internal Family affairs. Stefano Magaddino called Vinny's grandfather Vincenzo a "big bull in a china shop" and it's a perfect description of Vinny too.

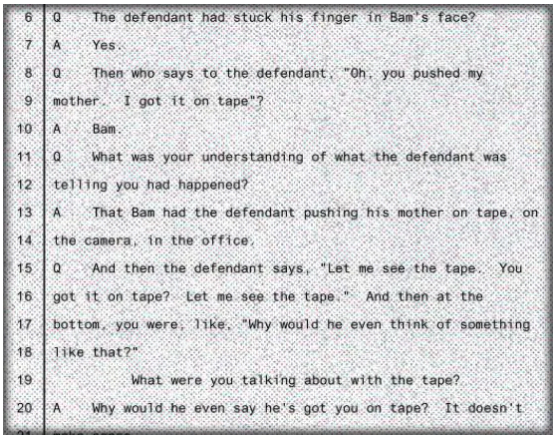
There were multiple examples cited by Asaro during the early 2010s where his outbursts even provoked non-members to "raise their hands" at him, mafia rules forbidding associates from threatening to strike a member let alone actually connecting. This occurred during one incident with Bam Cotrone while another involved Asaro's ongoing problems with Vincenzo Frogiero's car wash, one of the employees named "Chris" getting into an altercation with Asaro and putting his hands up to the elder *amico nostra*. That these mafia

associates, no doubt schooled in the rules, felt the need to raise their fists toward Asaro was due to the sheer intensity of his confrontations.

Frogiero (pictured) was involved in multiple Asaro disputes.

Bam Cotrone was constantly on Asaro's mind apart from the "hands" incident. The shylocking auto shop owner was originally on record with Vinny Asaro but Asaro "sold" Cotrone to his son Jerry for a payment of $25,000 though Vinny still felt ownership of his former associate and frequently found ways to secrete money from him without Jerry Asaro knowing. Vinny also inserted himself into disputes involving Cotrone, acting as both Cotrone's advocate and antagonist. Cotrone made himself an easy target for Vinny Asaro's anger as he'd made unauthorized loans to members Sandro Aiosa and Vincent Frogione and had also conducted himself poorly, at one point allegedly telling people he was a made member when he in fact wasn't.

During one confrontation between Vinny Asaro and Cotrone, Asaro shook his finger in Bam's face and Bam retorted that he had video footage of Asaro pushing Bam's mother captured by a camera in the auto shop's office. Cotrone erred in stating this, cooperator Valenti ironically commenting to Asaro that claiming to have video evidence against someone is a "rat" maneuever. Cotrone was proposed for membership by Jerry Asaro at one point along with John "Bazoo" Ragano but Vinny told Valenti he would do everything in his power to prevent this, adding that he would "start an actual riot" should they attempt to induct Bam. It's unclear if Vinny Asaro's opinion was the deciding factor but Cutrone was bypassed for membership while Ragano was inducted in 2013.

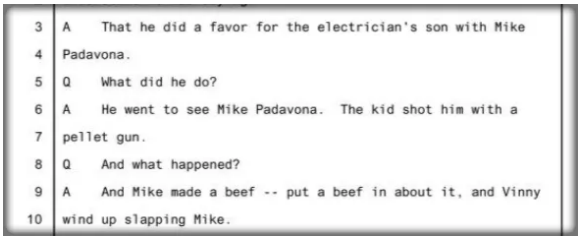


Q The defendant had stuck his finger in Bam's face?
A Yes.
Q Then who says to the defendant, "Oh, you pushed my mother. I got it on tape"?
A Bam.
Q What was your understanding of what the defendant was telling you had happened?
A That Bam had the defendant pushing his mother on tape, on the camera, in the office.
Q And then the defendant says, "Let me see the tape. You got it on tape? Let me see the tape." And then at the bottom, you were, like, "Why would he even think of something like that?"
What were you talking about with the tape?
A Why would he even say he's got you on tape? It doesn't

Cutrone had video footage of Asaro shoving his mother.

Following his induction, Ragano was recorded discussing Cotrone with Asaro. John Ragone, an employee of Bam Cotrone's auto shop, was expected to help keep Cotrone in line and told Asaro he typically "abused" Cotrone in the back room away from other people. Asaro retorted that he himself abused Cotrone in the front office in full view of everyone and also indicated he'd previously sent a group of enforcers to physically assault Cotrone at the shop. Though mafia murders in New York are extremely rare in modern years, the Asaro case showed that assault was frequently used to threaten associates and actual beatings were not uncommon, the senior citizen Asaro sometimes participating.

Mike Padavona had also been an associate under Vinny Asaro who was later released to Jerry Asaro and proposed for membership. Like Cotrone, Asaro still felt a degree of authority over Padavona and complained about him regularly. As with Cotrone, Asaro also planned to knock Padavona down as a proposed member. On one occasion, the son of an electrician shot Mike Padavona with a pellet gun which led Padavona to put in a formal "beef" with Jerry Asaro. Enraged yet again, Vinny Asaro intervened in the dispute and even slapped Padavona for escalating such a trivial issue. For his defense of the electrician and his son, Vinny Asaro received free electrical work. If Asaro did raise any issue about Padavona's induction it was ignored as Padavona ultimately became a Bonanno member.

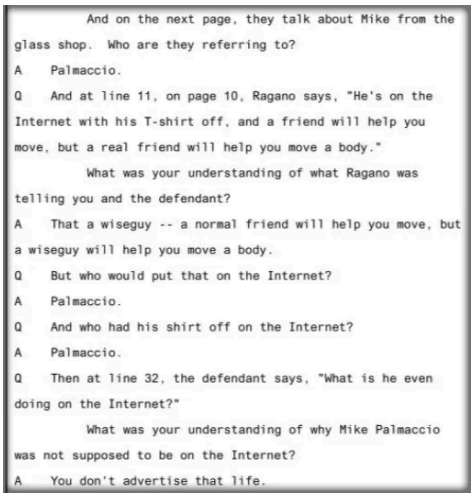


A That he did a favor for the electrician's son with Mike Padavona.
Q What did he do?
A He went to see Mike Padavona. The kid shot him with a pellet gun.
Q And what happened?
A And Mike made a beef -- put a beef in about it, and Vinny wind up slapping Mike.

Asaro intervened in a dispute between Padavona and an electrician.

Another Mike, Palmaccio, was already made and close to Jerry Asaro and Ronnie Giallanzo. Palmaccio was yet another younger figure in this circle who Vinny Asaro despised but Palmaccio drew everyone's ire thanks to his use of social media. At one point Palmaccio posted a Facebook meme using the quote "A friend will help you move, but a real friend will help you move a body." It was felt that Mike Palmaccio was essentially advertising himself as a Cosa Nostra member online, the Asaro crowd interpreting "friend" in mafia parlance to mean *amico nostra* or member. Palmaccio was further ostracized among his mafia peers by posting a shirtless photo of himself. During a recorded discussion of these infractions, Vinny Asaro summed it up succinctly: "What is he even doing on the internet?"

Even in the modern age, where Cosa Nostra looks and feels fundamentally different from the way it did in 1896 or even 1986, the social media conduct of a made member brings out the mafia's conservative nature. The "A friend will help you move…" quote is cute, macho bravado typically posted by harmless men and I myself have seen random people post it, but it's understandable why it would be controversial coming from a mafia member as it involves a play on the mafia's "friend" euphemism and a reference to murder. The shirtless photo is more interesting as it shows a much more old-minded approach. Frank Fiordilino recalled Vito Grimaldi, a member of the Asaro *decina*, talking fondly about how his mafioso father Giuseppe Grimaldi didn't believe men should ever be shirtless in front of others, even in their own home, and Vito held similar sentiments.



And on the next page, they talk about Mike from the glass shop. Who are they referring to?

A Palmaccio.

Q And at line 11, on page 10, Ragano says, "He's on the Internet with his T-shirt off, and a friend will help you move, but a real friend will help you move a body."

What was your understanding of what Ragano was telling you and the defendant?

A That a wiseguy -- a normal friend will help you move, but a wiseguy will help you move a body.

Q But who would put that on the Internet?

A Palmaccio.

Q And who had his shirt off on the Internet?

A Palmaccio.

Q Then at line 32, the defendant says, "What is he even doing on the Internet?"

What was your understanding of why Mike Palmaccio was not supposed to be on the Internet?

A You don't advertise that life.

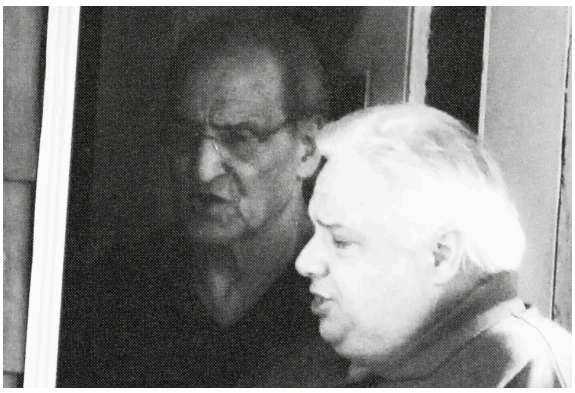
Palmaccio's online activity upset his fellow Bonanno members.

Mike Palmaccio's peers in the Asaro crew wanted him shelved for his social media activity. Jerry Asaro reportedly "chased" him from the neighborhood and Valenti commented to Vinny Asaro that Palmaccio had been shelved by the younger Asaro. Vinny, though in favor of Palmaccio's shelving, corrected

Valenti and told him that Jerry didn't have the authority to shelve anyone, indicating the administration are the only ones who can shelve a Family member. The Valenti tapes frequently show that despite Asaro's brutish, money-obsessed, and violent nature, he had a shrewd mind and keen understanding when it came to Cosa Nostra rules, protocol, and politics. He was very conscious of these details and adamant that they be navigated carefully and handled correctly. There are examples of Asaro blurring or bending the rules to his own benefit but he typically followed the traditional mafia framework and chastised Valenti for failing to understand the nuances of Cosa Nostra even after decades of schooling from the Asaros.

By the early 2010s, Gary Valenti was one of the only male Asaro relatives associated with the mafia who hadn't been made. Included on proposed member lists in the mid-80s, Matty Ianniello's arrest in 1985 resulted in Valenti's name failing to circulate properly. Valenti's massive unpaid debts to high-ranking mafiosi, habitual lying, and his embarassing journeys to Las Vegas then essentially ruled him out from future consideration. While cooperating, Valenti did press Jack Bonventre and Vinny Asaro for membership in the Bonanno Family but both men had a similar response: "You'd get in trouble," as Bonventre stated.

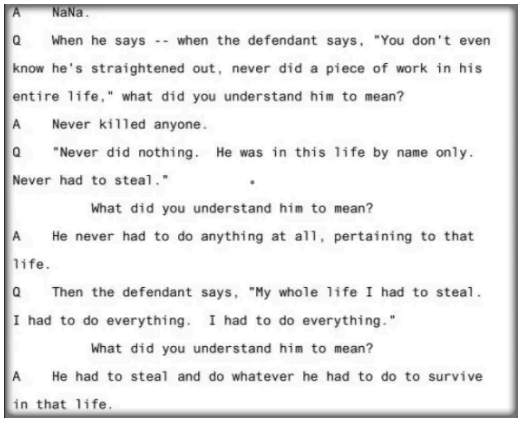
Jack Bonventre did consider proposing Valenti but walked it back seconds later. Vinny Asaro was even more resolute. Valenti had been blackballed by all of the loansharks in Ozone Park and his dishonorable reputation was well-known throughout the area, Vinny Asaro having taken the brunt of Valenti's infractions for decades. Valenti's son Anthony, known as "Sammy", had been made by this time, though. Sammy Valenti was no longer on speaking terms with his father, much as Jerry Asaro was avoiding Vinny, but the two sons had become close and Jerry inducted Sammy into the organization. Vinny naturally denounced the decision and felt Sammy Valenti had never done anything substantial enough to warrant membership. Asaro added that two other members sponsored by his son, John Carlucci and Mike Palmaccio, were similarly undeserving.



Asaro (L) looked down on Sammy Valenti's (R) membership.

Vinny Asaro's taped complaints about his son Jerry were widely reported after the 2014 arrest. The context, however, involved the open *consigliere* position offered to both Asaro and Jack Bonventre. Gary Valenti asked Vinny why he didn't suggest his son Jerry for the role, prompting the father to lash out about how Jerry Asaro only cares about his own interests. In Vinny's view, he lost his son when he named Jerry as his acting captain in the late '90s and commented that Jerry Asaro was the "last person in the world" who would receive any of Vinny's goodwill.

Like his criticisms of Sammy Valenti, Vinny Asaro felt the elderly NaNa Bonventre, Jack's father, was unqualified for Bonanno membership. Asaro noted that Bonventre had never committed a crime and was made solely because of his "name". Bonventre loaned out small sums of money but indeed there is no evidence he was active in traditional "organized crime" rackets like his son Jack, who once ran a large sportsbook and was engaged in various other illegal activity with the Asaros, including extortion. Asaro's comment about Bonventre being inducted for his "name" is interesting as it's an acknowledgment of the history of the Bonventre name in Bonanno circles. These Bonventres aren't known to be direct relatives of Joe Bonanno's uncles, one of which was Vinny's great-uncle, but they do likely connect to the original family tree that produced various Bonventres in the American mafia.

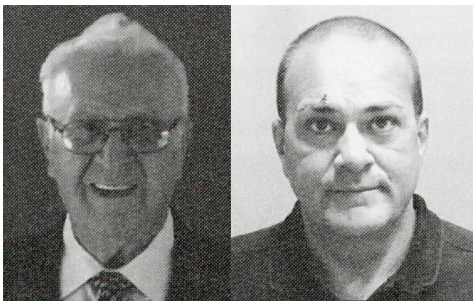


A NaNa.
Q When he says -- when the defendant says, "You don't even know he's straightened out, never did a piece of work in his entire life," what did you understand him to mean?
A Never killed anyone.
Q "Never did nothing. He was in this life by name only. Never had to steal."
What did you understand him to mean?
A He never had to do anything at all, pertaining to that life.
Q Then the defendant says, "My whole life I had to steal. I had to do everything. I had to do everything."
What did you understand him to mean?
A He had to steal and do whatever he had to do to survive in that life.

Asaro believed NaNa Bonventre was made because of his "name" alone.

The Sicilian-born NaNa Bonventre's father was a Vito Bonventre with significant stature in the Castellammare Family, so in this case NaNa's "name" comes from an immediate Sicilian mafia lineage. Frank Fiordilino was familiar with Vito Bonventre's history and stature in the Castellammare Family. It's unknown whether Vito held actual rank in the Family but he was understood to be a refined mafioso with a reputation as a peacemaker who helped mediate issues between the Family's rival factions. His son NaNa's secretive,

non-criminal membership in the Bonanno Family not only connects the two organizations in modern times but indicates this line of Bonventres were of the *alta* variety. Like the *alta* mafiosi of old, they still mingled with the *bassa* element as evidenced by NaNa Bonventre's association with Vinny Asaro, who despite having a "name" himself was a vicious street criminal for the entirety of his life.



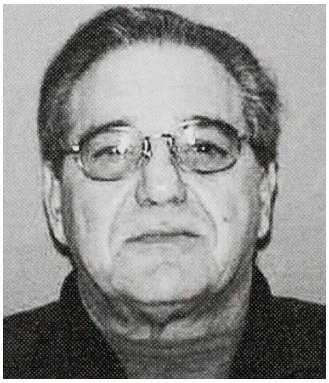
NaNa (L) & Jack (R) Bonventre have a Sicilian mafia lineage.

With his decades of experience as a made member and the countless formal relationships he'd made with other members, Vinny Asaro naturally helped facilitate formal introductions between various members who required a third party to officially acknowledge each others' membership. On one occasion in the early 2010s, Asaro asked Valenti to drive him to a diner meeting but Valenti, by now comfortable with his cousin, told Asaro he didn't want to have to wait in the car. Asaro clarified that he wouldn't be participating in the meeting and only needed to be there briefly to make a formal introduction between the unnamed attendees.

Sal Vitale testified at the 2015 trial about another rule concerning the introduction of a newly promoted member. A member who is promoted to captain or higher cannot officially tell anyone his new rank, even if he already knows them formally as *amico nostra*. A third party must introduce a promoted member with their new rank similar to basic membership introductions. Gary Valenti confirmed this as well in his testimony. When Asaro was promoted to *capodecina* by Tommy DiFiore, for example, Jack Bonventre attended the meeting so that he could serve as a third party and make future introductions for Asaro with his new rank. Vitale said when he was promoted to underboss himself years earlier by Massino they did the same, with Henry Bono in attendance to carry out the same function as Bonventre. A newly-promoted member isn't supposed to approach another member and tell them, "I'm a *capodecina* now."

Asaro was generally strict about following this protocol but found ways around it to let people know he was promoted. For example, he told Gary

Valenti about the promotion right away, which itself was a violation of the rules given Valenti's associate status. However, the two men went for a visit with Lucchese soldier Danny Rizzo afterward and Asaro wanted Rizzo to know about the promotion yet didn't have Bonventre there to communicate it. Asaro had Valenti meet with Rizzo first to tell him that Asaro was now a captain, that way when Asaro came inside Rizzo would already know. Rizzo was nonplussed by the news and didn't seem to understand why Asaro wanted the promotion but Valenti told Rizzo to smile at Asaro when he walked in to indicate he'd been informed of the news.

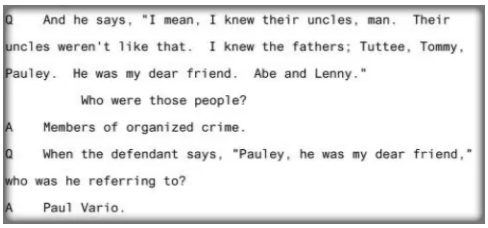


Danny Rizzo was a longtime associate of Asaro.

Asaro and Rizzo were longtime friends who knew each other as *amico nostra*, yet Asaro couldn't tell him directly that he was promoted. The irony is that he used a non-member associate to unofficially spread the news just so that his friend would know. Asaro was willing to break the rule completely by telling his cousin but understood that telling Rizzo was an additional matter given Rizzo was a fellow member. Rizzo was by this time bitter and broke, complaining more than once to Valenti and Asaro that he'd made no money since becoming a member and even asked Asaro for a meager $200 loan. Valenti felt Rizzo should still have money from the Lufthansa Heist stashed away but Asaro implied Jimmy Burke had stolen shares from the other participants, including Rizzo. Asaro also implied Burke had stolen shares from Asaro and Valenti but the latter corrected his cousin by reminding him they'd gambled their share away.

Asaro repeatedly complained about younger generations of Varios he continued to interact with, calling them liars and tarnishing their character. On at least two occasions he stated that the older Varios weren't like the younger ones, especially his "dear friend" Paul Vario. Paul Vario's son and nephew, both named Peter, were Lucchese members alive at this time and Asaro makes a fleeting reference to Peter during one diatribe about the Varios

so it could be inferred that Asaro was criticizing one or both of the Peter Varios. Very few members lived up to Asaro's standards.


Q And he says, "I mean, I knew their uncles, man. Their uncles weren't like that. I knew the fathers; Tuttee, Tommy, Pauley. He was my dear friend. Abe and Lenny."
Who were those people?
A Members of organized crime.
Q When the defendant says, "Pauley, he was my dear friend," who was he referring to?
A Paul Vario.

Asaro's love for the Varios ended with the older generation.

Asaro lamented to Valenti that he was one of the only true wiseguys left in Ozone Park, naming Jack Bonventre and Onofrio Macchio of the Genovese Family as others. When Valenti suggested the name of "Mike", probably Palmaccio, Asaro clarified he meant "people of substance", not just any made member. It is common not only within the mafia but in life as a whole to perceive degeneration and a lowering of standards all around you as you age and this was certainly true of Asaro's perspective on Cosa Nostra. Presumably his father and grandfather felt the same about the younger generations while they were alive although the American mafia changed perhaps even more drastically during Vinny's lifetime.

The Asaros Post-2015

The Bonanno Family descended into factionalism around the time the Asaro trial unfolded. In 2014, the administration reportedly consisted of Mancuso as official boss with Tommy DiFiore acting in his place and Simone Esposito as *consigliere*. John Spirito Jr. was carrying out a "street boss" role and may have temporarily served as acting *underboss* and acting *consigliere*. With DiFiore facing legal trouble, John Palazzolo became the acting boss and by 2015 Esposito was stripped of his title and shelved for stealing money from the Family "war chest". In March of that year, the Family voted in Joe Cammarano Jr. as the new acting boss and a short time later Palazzolo violated his supervised release.

There are conflicting accounts of official positions during this period, some of the confusion likely influenced by factionalism, the fleeting nature of acting positions, and lack of clarification over official vs. acting roles. A number of names have surfaced as the *consigliere* throughout much of the 2010s, for example, some of the information conflicting, and defense attorneys attempted to use this to their advantage in at least one Bonanno trial. By 2016, Joe Cammarano Jr. was confirmed as both the underboss and acting boss. Asaro nephew Ronnie Giallanzo had taken over acting captain duties for Jerry Asaro after Asaro and Jack Bonventre were indicted in 2014 and Giallanzo was

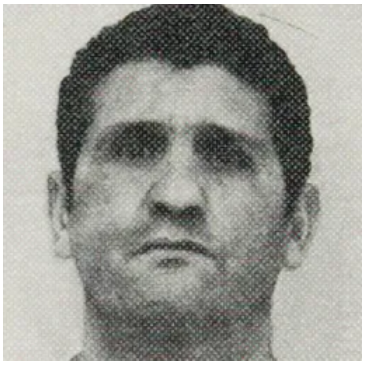
reportedly one of the leaders who voted Cammarano Jr. into his acting position.

Giallanzo (center) stepped up to lead the Asaro crew.

Though Vinny Asaro was acquitted in 2015, he was indicted again in 2017 for utilizing young associates to torch the car of a driver who had cut Asaro off in traffic. One of the associates was young John Gotti, the namesake grandson of the former Gambino boss. Asaro was convicted on the charge and sentenced to eight years in prison but received a compassionate release in 2020 during the COVID epidemic. Though Vinny Asaro's leadership role from the early 2010s had run its course, Ronnie Giallanzo was described by sources including John Pennisi as a force in Howard Beach during the mid-late 2010s though he was indicted as the acting captain in 2017 along with three soldiers of the Asaro crew, the arrests occuring the same month Vinny Asaro was indicted for arson.

2017 was also the year that Joe Cammarano Jr. attempted to depose Michael Mancuso. Cammarano, *consigliere* John Zancocchio, and the Grimaldis, now both captains, were shelved following the attempt which was additionally curtailed by legal trouble Cammarano and Zancocchio experienced the following year. A Bonanno member who cooperated during this period, Thomas Carrube, had been told by Vincent Badalamenti in early 2018 that Cammarano Jr. was orchestrating a "coup" against Mancuso and Carrube highlighted the tension between these factions. Mancuso loyalists also experienced their own issues with the FBI which further destabilized the Family though Mancuso managed to reaffirm his leadership role after his release from prison in 2019.

It's unclear what role the Asaro group played in the factionalism beyond Giallanzo supporting Joe Cammarano Jr.'s initial bid for acting boss. Giallanzo was off the street by the time the "coup" was fully underway and the Asaro crew's leading members were themselves incarcerated or in the process of going to prison. Jack Bonventre was released in late 2016 but reportedly moved to Upstate New York where he runs a chain of automotive businesses. Jerry Asaro has seemingly remained a *capodecina* since the 1990s.



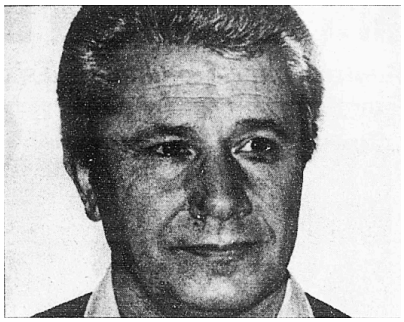
Jerry Asaro has remained a fixture in the Bonanno hierarchy.

Former Bonanno boss turned government witnesss Joe Massino testified that one of his first choices for the Family's ruling panel circa late 2004 or early 2005 was Jerry Asaro, though the Family's implosion prevented this from taking place. In December 2005, Jerry attended a meeting of Family leaders where Asaro was asked where he stood with regard to the growing factionalism between Vinnie Basciano and Michael Mancuso but Asaro claimed to be undecided or neutral at that time. By 2017 the Family's politics had pivoted, pitting Mancuso loyalists against the Cammarano-led group. When Vito Grimaldi died in 2022, Mancuso reportedly barred the shelved Joseph Cammarano Jr. from attending even though Grimaldi was his father-in-law. Cammarano attended regardless and was accompanied by a group of biker friends, culminating in a brawl that left several Bonanno members aligned with Mancuso beaten.

Jerry Asaro was released from prison in early 2023, his father passing away later that year. He is the last known Asaro in the Family and now senior in age himself, being in his late 60s at the time of this writing. Though schooled by his father, descriptions of Asaro differ considerably in that he is more circumspect, self-controlled, and capable of producing consistent income. He proved himself capable of handling morbid assignments when he helped remove Paul Katz's long-decomposed remains from the basement of the Burke property on Liberty Avenue and in the early '90s Jerry shot a woman who had assaulted his sister.

Through his access to a car-crusher, Jerry Asaro also destroyed the vehicle used in the Gerlando Sciascia murder on behalf of boss Joe Massino in 1999, for which Massino extended his personal thanks. Sal Vitale felt it was unnecessary and risky for the boss to thank Asaro for the task and therefore implicate himself in a murder but Massino nonetheless acknowledged Asaro's assistance. Vitale previously solicited Asaro for help destroying Vitale's wife's car for an insurance scam. While employed at Nassau Ready-Mix, owned by

longtime associate Frank Sciarrino, Asaro also oversaw the concrete company's crushing operations between 2005 and 2014.



Jerry Asaro helped with the aftermath of the Sciascia (pictured) murder.

It's not difficult to envision Jerry Asaro remaining a pivotal figure in the Bonanno Family until his time eventually comes. He has cultivated a loyal crew that includes relatives and a cross-section of tough, violent affiliates as well as "earners" who generate both legitimate and illegitimate income for the Family. Despite descending from Castellammarese nobility, the Asaros in East New York and Ozone Park are a blue collar faction, the Asaros themselves working in small-scale construction businesses and their associates heavily involved in the automotive industry and collision repair.

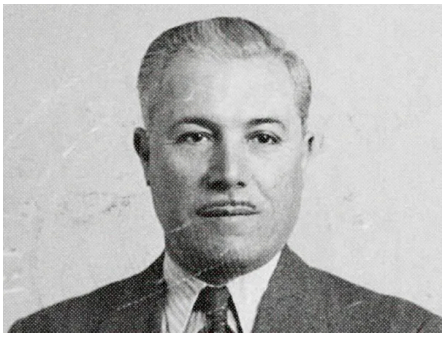
The story of Vinny and Jerry Asaro is one of Americanized "gangsterism" in some respects but they did not or more accurately could not forget their roots. Despite their association with all manner of New York mafiosi and even non-Italian criminals, the Asaro crew itself reflected patterns found in the early Bonanno Family. Various members under the Asaros have had heritage in Trapani province even outside of Castellammare. Deceased member Gasper Cammarata reported to Vinny Asaro in the 1990s and his heritage traced back to Partanna. The Grimaldis were once under Asaro and came from Santa Ninfa. The Bonventres of course are *compaesani* of the Asaros and also represent a connection to the Castellammare Family itself. It is somewhat phenomenal that after generations of change in American Cosa Nostra, there are not only still Asaros and Bonventres in the Bonanno Family, they are close confederates within the same *decina*.

Other Possible Mafia Relations

Another Asaro made into the Bonanno Family was Andrew Asaro (b. 1927). Andrew's father Giuseppe Asaro (b. 1887) initially arrived to New York in 1903 accompanying his "uncle" Girolamo Asaro and the two were heading to Giuseppe's father Giacomo Asaro (b. 1864) at 243 Elizabeth Street, which would become "our" Girolamo Asaro's address for the next several years. Giacomo Asaro subsequently left the United States then arrived back to

Girolamo at 243 Elizabeth in 1906, the ship's manifest including a selection of familiar Castellammarese surnames peppered throughout this article like Giordano, DiGregorio, Magaddino, Borruso, Fiordilino, DiBenedetto, DiFilippi, Turriciano, and even Fodera, a variation of the false surname Girolamo Asaro used in 1908.

Though he spent time in New York during at least two periods, I'm unable to confirm if Giacomo Asaro remained in the United States long-term. His son Giuseppe initially didn't, seemingly bouncing between Castellammare and New York. Giuseppe Asaro left the United States sometime after his 1903 arrival then returned to New York from Sicily in 1912, listing his departure contact as father Giacomo Asaro in Castellammare, confirming Giacomo did return there. Giuseppe Asaro married Anna Anselmo in New York in early 1913. Though on her naturalization application she claimed to have been born in Castellammare and immigration records confirm she was living there before New York, Giuseppe's own naturalization states his wife was born in Monte San Giuliano, another union between these two *comuni*.



Andrew's father Giuseppe Asaro (pictured) was the son of Giacomo.

The Asaros' eldest son Giacomo was born in New York in late 1913 but the young family returned to Sicily within the next few years where two daughters were born in 1916 and 1920. Giuseppe Asaro and his family moved back to the United States permanently in 1921, Giuseppe eventually finding employment in the familiar Asaro trade of garment pressing. Giuseppe's son Andrew was born in Brooklyn in 1927 but the family eventually moved to New Jersey, living for many years in the areas of East Paterson and Lodi. By 1950 Andrew was living in nearby Elmwood Park working as a bartender.

Relatively little is known about Andrew Asaro's involvement in the mafia beyond his eventual membership, prolific researcher LCNBios being the primary source for information on the FBI's investigation into Andrew's activities and connections. Asaro was inducted into the Bonanno Family around May 1978, less than a year after Vinny Asaro's induction, and Andrew belonged to the *decina* of Nicola "Nick the Battler" DiStefano, one report

suggesting there may have even been a relation between Andrew Asaro and DiStefano. DiStefano had heritage in Salemi and his crew is believed to have included DiStefano's *compaesano* Paul Sciacca, the former boss whose heritage included Salemi and nearby Santa Ninfa, as well as Vincenzo Morsellino of Calatafimi and Bobby Tartamella, a former captain whose father was Castellammare-born *consigliere* Giovanni Tartamella. The Morales, Vito Bonventre's in-laws, may have been with this crew as well, providing an indirect connection to the other Asaros.

Bobby (L) & Frank (R) Tartamella were under DiStefano.

In 1978, the same year as Andrew's induction, LCNBios noted that he was employed at a bar owned by Angelo "Moe" Presinzano in Manhattan. Presinzano was a key aide of Carmine Galante mentioned earlier for his close friendship and association with Vinny Asaro's uncle Mickey Zaffarano, Presinzano taking over the Zaffarano crew in the years before 1978 although by then Zaffarano had been promoted back to his former position while Presinzano too kept his captain rank. Andrew's employment with Presinzano provides the first material link between Andrew Asaro and the "main" Asaro branch within the Bonannos, as familiarity with Presinzano indicates that Andrew knew Zaffarano as well and therefore the other Asaros.

The FBI was also aware of Andrew's general relation to Vinny Asaro but did not document any known interaction between the two men nor did they or their sources specify what the exact relation consisted of. LCNBios' coverage of Andrew Asaro includes a report from an FBI source too who stated that he was not "street wise" but received membership through his "political connections". Further context isn't given and it can't be stated whether this referred to internal mafia politics or connections Asaro had to the world of "legitimate" politics. This detail at least suggests Asaro did not have a reputation as a "gangster" or "street guy", unlike his contemporary relatives in the Brooklyn-Queens area.

Andrew Asaro spent a period living on Long Island in the late 1970s and early 1980s but moved to Ozone Park by the mid-80s where he continued to work as a bartender. Despite never having lived in Brooklyn or Queens previously, this places Andrew in close proximity to Vinny Asaro and an incident documented by LCNBios also connects Andrew to an Ozone Park

manslaughter case in which Andrew Asaro and his son were involved in the baseball bat beating of a man named Raymond Raia who later died of his wounds. Following the attack, law enforcement attempted to find Andrew Asaro at a collision repair shop owned by Joseph Marsala, a Bonanno associate discussed earlier in this article via the testimony of both Sal Vitale and Gary Valenti at Vinny Asaro's 2015 trial; Marsala was "on record" with Vinny Asaro in the early '80s. Andrew's son, who was the primary culprit, eventually served several years in prison for beating Raia to death.

ASARO, Andrew	204 West End Ave. Massapequa, N.Y.	4/12/27	None
ASARO, Vincent A.	164-11 88th St. Howard Beach (Queens)	3/04/35	NYSIIS 0601043Y

Andrew & Vinny Asaro both joined the Bonanno Family in the '70s.

LCNBios shared an excerpt too in which New York FBI agents contacted the FBI's Boston Field Office due to a belief that Andrew Asaro owned property in Arlington, a suburb north of Boston. If indeed Andrew had a presence in Boston it ties into Girolamo Asaro's earlier residence and death there in 1912 and suggests Girolamo's branch was not alone in establishing or maintaining ties to Massachusetts even though over 70 years had passed in the interim.

Andrew Asaro again resided in New Jersey by 1991 and he died there that year. His obituary states he worked as a plant manager for the Clifton Laminating Company for the last ten years of his life though this conflicts with his residences and employment in other parts of New York during the previous decade. The Castellammaresi themselves aren't known for having a significant presence in New Jersey but the Bonanno Family had strong ties to the Newark Family and a historic Bonanno *decina* under Giuseppe Colletti and his brother-in-law Angelo Caruso had a presence in Lodi though what's known of their crew shows it to be generally non-Castellammarese yet still entirely Sicilian.

The Paterson area where Asaro grew up was primarily linked to the Genovese Family under Guarino "Willie" Moretti and one of the Asaros' neighbors during their time there was a Moretti, relation to Willie undetermined. This part of New Jersey also had a connection to Andrew Asaro's extended cousin Jerry Asaro, Vincenzo's son, as Jerry's 1936 bootlegging arrest included an associate named Emilio Matera who lived in Lodi. Though Andrew was just a child at the time, it links both branches of the Asaros to the area. Andrew Asaro had no known criminal history outside of the Raia manslaughter case in which he assisted his son in a seemingly unplanned attack at an Ozone Park bar.

That Andrew Asaro was born in 1927 and spent his upbringing around East Paterson but still managed to become a sleeper member of the Bonanno Family is curious. Andrew Asaro is not known to have associated with the more well-known Asaros beyond circumstantial connections via the brief period he spent in Ozone Park and likely familiarity with Mickey Zaffarano through Moe Presinzano but his initiation into the Bonanno Family within a different branch of the Family could suggest that his father Giuseppe or other older generations of Asaros from these lesser-known branches were early members. LCNBios discovered that Andrew's father purchased five cases of olive oil from Hi-Grade Packing in 1957, this company owned by Bonanno underboss Francesco Garofalo, a *compaesano* from the same generation who soon thereafter retired to Castellammare del Golfo. This fleeting, innocent transaction at least confirms a level of familiarity between Giuseppe Asaro and his contemporaries atop the Bonanno Family during Asaro's senior years.

Andrew's father had a connection to Garofalo (pictured).

Like Girolamo Asaro's daughter's marriage to a Giordano, Andrew's great-aunt in Castellammare was also a Giordano, suggesting deeper ties in Sicily to the Giordano name. These Asaros' actual relation to Girolamo Asaro also requires some untangling. Though "our" Girolamo Asaro is seemingly the "brother" who arrived to Andrew's grandfather Giacomo in 1903 at 243 Elizabeth, and who Giacomo Asaro then arrived to at the same address in 1906, our Girolamo also living at this address when his wife and children joined him in New York in 1905, this is not an accurate description of their relationship. Castellammare del Golfo vital records confirm Giacomo Asaro was actually born in 1864 to a father named Giuseppe Asaro, not Mariano. Giacomo's eldest son Giuseppe, Andrew's father, was thus named for his grandfather. Giacomo Asaro's father Giuseppe was however a brother of Don Mariano Asaro, making Giacomo Asaro a first cousin of "the" Girolamo Asaro.

Just like his brothers Bartolomeo and Mariano Asaro, "Don Giuseppe" and his wife Rosalia Sceusa named their eldest son Girolamo after his grandfather. Giuseppe's son Girolamo was born in 1857 like Mariano's son of the same name. This Girolamo died in Castellammare in 1913, a year after his namesake

cousin in Boston. This opens the possibility that the Girolamo Asaro who arrived to 243 Elizabeth with Giacomo's son Giuseppe in 1903 was Giacomo Asaro's elder brother rather than Mariano's son, this Girolamo claiming Giacomo was his brother on the manifest. It's possible too that our Girolamo was using the identity of his namesake first cousin much as he adopted the identity of a likely maternal cousin named Fodera given he shared his full name and birth year with the other Girolamo Asaro; the 1908 legal proceedings against "our" Girolamo also noted that the defense argued he was being confused with another Girolamo Asaro. If Giuseppe's son Girolamo did spend time in New York at the 243 Elizabeth address along with his brother Giacomo and cousin Girolamo, it was temporary given he died back in Castellammare just years later.

Both Asaro branches were connected to 243 Elizabeth Street.

Another confirmed brother of Giacomo was Carlo Asaro (b. 1861) who married Marianna Galante in 1892. Carlo's son Giuseppe (b. 1892) arrived to New York in 1911 and spent years living on the Lower East Side where he married a woman from Caltanissetta before moving to Long Island City, Queens, by 1930. This Giuseppe Asaro inexplicably moved to Beaumont, Texas, at some point during the 1930s where he worked as a grocer and died in 1957.

A younger Bartolomeo Asaro was related to the clan too and visited New York in 1905. Bartolomeo Asaro was listed as 45-years-old and arrived to brother Giacomo who was living on 88 Prince Street about five blocks from the Prince and Elizabeth cross street where Girolamo Asaro initially settled. As with Giacomo, I'm unable to find evidence Bartolomeo Asaro remained in America and there were several Bartolomeo Asaros from this generation in Castellammare, one of which produced descendants who lived in Michigan. A Giuseppe Asaro (b. 1888) arrived to Detroit during the 1910s, returned to Castellammare for a time, then permanently settled in Detroit in 1923. This Giuseppe's father was named Bartolomeo, opening the possibility that this was another one of Don Giuseppe Asaro's grandsons. The "original" brothers, the Dons Bartolomeo, Mariano, and Giuseppe Asaro back in Castellammare, could have been formative Castellammare Family members themselves given

Mariano and Giuseppe's branches are confirmed to have produced members in New York City.

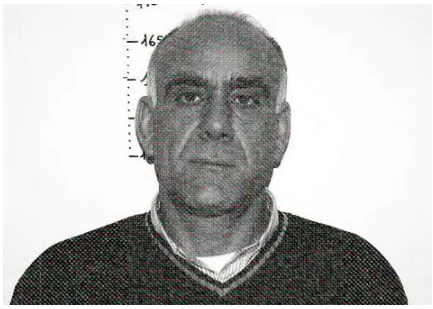
Girolamo Asaro's brother Vincenzo was mentioned earlier in the article, his wife Illuminata DiSalvo's sister marrying the Vito Bonventre who was killed in 1930 and her other siblings marrying Bonventre's own sister and brother, there being an added layer of relation through the DiSalvos' mother who was an Iracani like Girolamo Asaro's wife. The older generations are much more difficult to speculate about given a lack of inside information into the pre-1950s mafia but Vincenzo Asaro could be considered a possible affiliate of the Bonanno Family given who his brother and in-laws were though like brother Girolamo he appears to have died in the 1910s. His daughter's marriage to a Nicolo Buccellato opens up further possibilities given the extensive mafia membership of the Buccellato clan.

Other mafia relations undoubtedly existed in Castellammare.

A current leader in Castellammare Del Golfo is Mariano Asaro whose stays in the United States earned him the nickname "the American" among Sicilian mafiosi. Italian authorities have stated that Asaro served as a liaison between Sicily and the United States, Frank Fiordilino confirming that his uncle Francesco Navarra instructed him to pick Asaro up from the airport with another unidentified man, the visiting Sicilians intending to meet with Baldo Amato. Mariano Asaro was identified as a *capodecina* in the Castellammare Family in the 1990s and 2000s when the Family was headed by Gioacchino Calabro, a relative of New York Colombo captain Dino Calabro who became a cooperating witness in the 2000s and was in turn related to the Fiordilino clan.

In July 2020, Mariano Asaro was arrested as the new Castellammare *capo* following the June arrest of previous boss Francesco Domingo and other mafiosi in Castellammare, including an elderly Felice Buccellato, showing that in both 1896 and 2020 the surnames Asaro and Buccellato remain a part of the Castellammarese mafia. Domingo himself may descend from the same line as early Bonanno captain Sebastiano "Buster from Chicago" Domingo, a prolific

gunman during the Castellammarese War, and the investigation noted that Francesco Domingo's aunt had married a son of infamous Bonanno boss and *capo dei capi* Salvatore Maranzano. The mother of Vito Bonventre, the one murdered in 1930, was also a Domingo. Recordings made by the *Carabinieri* during the investigation documented how Francesco Domingo's uncle and father were members of the Castellammare Family decades earlier but the uncle was killed and Domingo's father was "*posato*" (literally "posed", a Sicilian synonym for "shelved") and Francesco still sought revenge against rivals in the Castellammare Family decades after these events.



Mariano Asaro is a current leader in Castellammare.

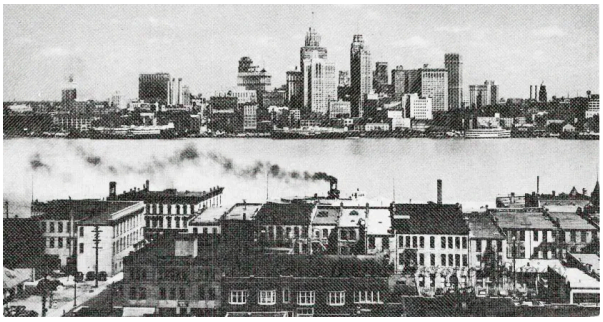
Recent investigations into Castellammare del Golfo revealed renewed relationships between the Bonanno Family and the mafia in Castellammare, including meetings, messages, and favor requests. Sicilian Bonanno members Antonino Mistretta and Giovanni Carollo specifically met with Francesco Domingo in relation to these matters. These connections are not what they once were but they do still exist even if they are largely personal in nature and the visiting Bonanno members noted having received approval or assistance in contacting Domingo via an unspecified "Joe", possibly Giuseppe Bosco who served on the acting administration during that decade. The investigation also revealed at least peripheral contact between the Bonanno Family and Sciacca mafia boss Accursio Dimino, whose affiliates have ties to the Bonanno Family, particularly Sergio Gucciardi who appeared in a 2013 surveillance photo with Vinny Asaro in Queens.

Mariano Asaro could be a distant cousin of Vincent Asaro. The father of Vinny's mafioso great-grandfather Girolamo was also named Mariano Asaro and so was Vinny's great-uncle. Given the Sicilian naming tradition, this often suggests a common ancestor. Girolamo's involvement with the Castellammarese mafia in the 1890s could indicate there were other Asaro relatives who remained in Castellammare and produced today's Mariano Asaro, a practicing dentist and Cosa Nostra leader. The Giuseppe Asaro from the 1987 Castellammare case shows that Mariano is not simply a one-off and the name has a recurring presence in the clan's hometown. Mariano Asaro's

medical background too draws back to the Asaros' historic nobility and *possidenti* status in 19th century Castellammare. It's possible today's Mariano Asaro descends from a sibling of Girolamo Asaro who remained in Sicily and passed the Mariano name through his own lineage back in Castellammare.

There are an endless number of other potential relations on both sides of the Atlantic, the Asaro name surfacing in family trees for many mafiosi connected to Castellammare. Early Bonanno figure Santo Vultaggio's mother was an Asaro and he too was born in Castellammare. Bonanno member Epifanio "Fani" D'Angelo was another member born in Castellammare and his paternal grandmother was an Asaro, her husband and Epifanio's namesake grandfather once living in Little Italy very close to Girolamo Asaro's saloon. Bonanno boss Gaspare DiGregorio was even related to the Asaro name through his second wife.

There may be additional relations within the maternal branches of the Asaro tree as well given the tendency for mafia members to marry women from established mafia clans. Girolamo Asaro's mother was Giuseppa Sarcona, her surname shared with Giovanni Bonanno's wife, and this article's Detroit section mentioned a Luca Sarcona from Castellammare Del Golfo who was murdered in Detroit in 1918. This Sarcona associated with the Bosco brothers, the same maiden name as Asaro's mother-in-law. Bonanno member Mimi Sabella married a Sarcona, too, Sabella a relative of the DiGregorios and Magaddinos. Girolamo Asaro's alias of "Vincenzo Fudera" was also in reference to a real man named Vincenzo Fodaro whose mother was a Sarcona.



Asaro connections could also exist in historic Detroit.

Vincenzo Asaro's wife's heritage in Ficarazzi, Palermo, and his son Jerry's early alcohol arrest with the elder Giuseppe Carcione from Santa Flavia could point to another branch of connections. The area around Bagheria and eastern metropolitan Palermo was a mafia stronghold every bit as contagious as Castellammare del Golfo's mafia tradition. We lack insight into who the Macchiarellas were in Ficarazzi but it would be unsurprising if Vincenzo Asaro married into a family with connections to the Palermitano mafia.

There are sometimes empty coincidences and dead ends on the genealogical side of mafia research but as this article proves, the actual connections between early Sicilian mafiosi are maddeningly extensive and seemingly endless. It's likely the Asaros were linked to even more figures outside of those presented here but this collection of research provides more than enough substance proving who Girolamo Asaro was and why he created an enduring legacy that stretches throughout the entire known history of the Bonanno Family up to present day that derives from the 20th century Castellammare mafia. It is my hope that other researchers draw from some of these leads and find additional connections related to the lesser-known names discussed throughout this article.

Conclusion

Similar to "Fiction Meets Reality in the Gambino Family's Garofalo Crew" which explores the mafia roots of Michael DiLeonardo and his peers in the Gambino Family, this is a parallel article in that it explores the familial origins of modern Bonanno members whose ancestors were early Sicilian mafiosi and provides other tangents that flesh out the history and interconnected nature of the Trapani network. In this case, the 1896 investigation in Castellammare del Golfo offers insight into the activity and stature of Girolamo Asaro long before his descendants became household names in New York mafia circles, giving even more substance to our understanding of who this clan was and the role they played in shaping the Bonanno Family. Girolamo Asaro was confirmed as an influential member in Castellammare del Golfo in the 1890s and although we don't have American sources who confirmed his membership in the Bonanno Family in the early 1900s, the circumstantial evidence surrounding his 1908 arrest points overwhelmingly to his membership in the formative organization, making the Asaros the only known clan to produce five generations of direct father-son succession in the American mafia.

Stories like that of the Asaros and their associates reinforces my deep interest in Cosa Nostra. These were not random groups of Italian criminals who shook off the influence of Sicilian “Mustache Petes” and organized themselves after successfully winning "beer wars" during Prohibition, but a continuous fabric of interconnected mafiosi who transplanted their organization here and maintained the same mafia entity even through the process of Americanization and pan-Italian recruitment. The Asaros are of course exceptional given they represent five generations of unbroken Bonanno membership and their roots in the Castellammarese mafia are confirmed but there are naturally other figures whose roots are more tentative yet show signs of ongoing association with Cosa Nostra going back to Sicily. Michael

DiLeonardo for example, whose grandfather was an early Gambino captain, was aware of his great-grandfather's involvement in the mafia going back to Bisacquino and Michael's grandfather Vincenzo DiLeonardo maintained correspondence with Bisacquino leader Vito Cascio Ferro as evidenced by a 1909 letter obtained by Italian authorities. These individuals are the living history not simply of a criminal phenomenon but an unbelievable cultural phenomenon that outsiders like myself don't "admire" yet find infinitely intriguing given its endurance and complexity.

I long planned to publish this article on "Mafia Bloodlines" given the "A Society Unto Themselves" portion of this site's name is a direct, translated quote from the original 1890s investigation into the Castellammarese Family by Sicilian investigators. "A Society Unto Themselves" is the perfect description of what Cosa Nostra is, or at least what it is intended to be. It is their own shadow government, yes, but above all else the mafia is designed to maintain an insular society comprised of members, associates, relatives, and community members who understand the system and adhere to its laws despite its brutal and often corrupt tendencies.

It is people like the Asaros who defined and still define this society. Even in the 2010s, Vinny Asaro's life revolved around this system and he navigated it carefully despite his volatile behavior. The mentality displayed by Vinny Asaro on Gary Valenti's recordings was distinct from his ancestors in that Asaro was an American-born mafioso living in modern New York but his core worldview was identical to their own. Vinny was a troublemaker who regularly upset his underworld peers with his emotional outbursts but multiple sources also framed him as a respected veteran of the mafia tradition. Gary Valenti, Sal Vitale, and Anthony Ruggiano were all well-aware of Vinny Asaro's lineage in the organization and believed it reflected positively on the Asaros on the streets of East Brooklyn and Ozone Park even if they looked down on Vinny's temper and "brokester" reputation. The 21st century Bonanno Family apparently recognized this, promoting Vinny Asaro to the ruling panel in the 2010s when the organization was at its lowest point and needed revival. Personality aside, Asaro was a fierce individual who understood and believed in "the life" because it was all he and his family have known regardless of when and where they appear.

The story of the Asaro clan also highlights the complicated familial relationships at play in and around Cosa Nostra. Mafia politics could pull relatives in different directions, as evidenced by Vincenzo Asaro siding with Gaspare DiGregorio against Joe Bonanno despite his brother-in-law Vito Bonventre being Bonanno's loyal uncle. Both Jerry and his son Vinny readily

pulled relatives into the mafia orbit but in Vinny's case he often manipulated and used them. However, Vinny Asaro also schooled and elevated his relatives within "the life", sometimes to his own dismay given the falling out that occurred after his son Jerry became a captain and wrote his father off. Vinny Asaro and Gary Valenti's relationship was a perfect example of this push-pull, Asaro offering his cousin status as a Cosa Nostra associate and including him in the mafia network but also bullying him out of New York more than once.

Asaro and Valenti's relationship was not one-dimensional. On one hand, there are endless examples of Vinny Asaro ruthlessly abusing and belittling Valenti, some of this comically referenced or caught on tape between the two senior citizens, but there was also a strong fondness between Asaro and Valenti that Valenti used to his advantage and Asaro's detriment. Vinny Asaro had a custom ring made in honor of his father Jerry and gave it to Valenti along with Jerry Asaro's car but Valenti sold the ring almost immediately and let the car be repossessed without making any payments. Valenti used his cousin's reputation to borrow money from major mafia leaders like Lucchese boss Vic Amuso and stole money intended for Anthony Spero then lied about it, plus he owed debts to countless other members and associates.

Valenti's theft of money from Asaro is understandable if it's true Asaro cheated Valenti out of many scores but Valenti put Asaro's reputation at great risk by stealing from other mafia leaders and refusing to honor his debts. Asaro told Valenti multiple times that if it weren't for him Valenti would have been killed and it's difficult to disagree. Yet there was comradery and Asaro was Valenti's protector and advocate in addition to being his tormentor. Asaro cousin Gary Ferreri Jr. testified against Asaro's nephew Bobby Giallanzo but it was Vinny who initially tried to reel his son Jerry Asaro in when the latter wanted to kill Ferreri Jr., the hair-trigger Vinny for once stressing a calm, rational approach given Ferreri Jr. was their cousin.

Blood was extremely important to Vinny Asaro. His story contrasts with those of his grandfather and great-grandfather in that his best friend was the Irish Jimmy Burke and he worked closely with all types of Americanized "gangsters". However, when it came to the Asaros' inner circle, he surrounded himself with relatives and members with a longstanding history in the mafia and Sicilian heritage. The first half of this article explored Girolamo Asaro and the Castellammarese mafia clans of old and though this was not the mafia environment Vinny Asaro was part of in his later years, he is a remnant of it and he followed the same model. It was seemingly understood that if you were a relative of Vinny Asaro, you had the option of pursuing mafia association if not membership.

The younger Jerry Asaro's confirmation sponsor was Jimmy Burke and Asaro's family has been in the United States now for 120 years, making Jerry an undeniably "American" mafia figure. Yet in addition to relatives who share some of his blood, Jerry Asaro's crew includes Bonventres with roots in the Castellammare Family. In 1908, the elder Stefano Magaddino wrote a letter to Jerry's namesake great-great-grandfather Girolamo Asaro complaining about the "venemous goat" Vito Bonventre and Girolamo's own daughter married another Vito Bonventre. Asaro crew member NaNa Bonventre's father was yet another Vito Bonventre, possibly descended from one of the same original branches, these Castellammarese names cemented together throughout the entire known history of the Bonanno Family.

Without delving into his living family in specific detail, it should be noted that Jerry Asaro is not known to have any sons. It appears the direct lineage of Girolamo Asaro will end with Jerry though it's possible the clan could continue through the other branches of relatives who have attained Bonanno membership. Ronnie Giallanzo for example has stepped in as an aggressive heir to the Asaro legacy, sharing not only Asaro blood but a "Death Before Dishonor" tattoo that Vinny and Jerry Asaro had inked on their own bodies. The ongoing existence of Asaros in the Castellammare Family, in particular Mariano Asaro, could keep the name relevant in Cosa Nostra overseas for years to come. The Asaros perfectly illustrate the continuous nature of Cosa Nostra, not only adhering to the same rules and customs as their ancestors but keeping the system alive with the same blood.

The Bonanno Family contrasts with Detroit in that the latter organization no longer reflects its earlier mafia roots in Castellammare and Monte San Giuliano, though it does still reflect its Palermitano history on the other side of the provincial border, with many remaining members still tracing their heritage and lineage back to Terrasini and surrounding areas. While the tangents on Detroit, Boston, Montreal, or even Brewster may seem unnecessary given the primary focus of this article deals with the Asaros and the dominant Castellammarese clans who informed the Bonanno membership, they were not introduced randomly. Everything discussed here is derived from threads found in the 19th century Sicilian mafia investigations along the northern Trapani coast and my writing follows those threads wherever they may go. Cosa Nostra was there in virtually every case.

—

Special thank you to Dr. James Buccellato, Griffin Orlich, and Frank Fiordilino. Buccellato provided extensive help with the Buccellato clan's history and other resources on the Castellammarese mafia, Orlich provided significant

help with broader Bonanno research, and Frank's personal stories and knowledge of Castellammare del Golfo and its mafia clans as well as his personal involvement with the Bonanno Family were invaluable to this article.

Thank you also to JD / LCNBios, Richard Warner, Angelo Santino, Lennert van't Riet, Ben Sangster, Jon Black, Ed Valin, Tom Hunt, David Critchley, Joel Turner, Jack Harris, Daniel Waugh, Fabien Rossat, Tony Bombassolo, and the entire Black Hand Forum for providing resources and/or research that assisted with the article, both directly and indirectly. An additional thanks to "Chicago Tony" who is not Bonanno- nor Castellammarese-focused in his own research but continually assists with my analysis of all aspects of the mafia phenomenon. This type of research cannot be conducted in a vacuum and I am greatly appreciative of anyone who trades information or enjoys discussing the sorts of details relevant to my own work. If I failed to credit anyone, please let me know.

Thank you to Fabien, Griffin, Stevan, "Joe Puzzles", and others for providing assistance with various photos used in the article. The photos and information used in this article come from a multitude of sources and it would be impossible to formally cite the origins of every single one. Despite visual art being another hobby of mine, I am not particularly "visually focused" when it comes to this subject, preferring to invest myself in information and analysis, but I include images to provide my articles with some "color" and simply to break up what is otherwise a dense, overwhelming stream of text.

I encourage anyone to offer commentary or corrections. This is not an academic pursuit nor is it done for "credentialism" but the information presented here is thoroughly sourced and held to the same standard so I welcome questions, relevant criticism, and alternative analysis. My approach is not perfect but it is thorough and the goal is always to continue the discussion rather than present a "final word". Weaving the complex details of transatlantic mafia history with present day American "Cosa Nostra" is a challenging but truly enjoyable hobby of mine and I do it because these links, however rare, do exist. "I do it because I can."

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Comments Restacks

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Eric Stonefelt Mar 28 *Edited*

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Note that I corrected small typos (I'm sure I missed some, the editing process is ridiculous) and added a few small pieces tonight (3/28). Nothing major but if you viewed this initially note that there were a few very minor additions and changes. Thanks a ton for all of the positive feedback so far. I look forward to any commentary as I'm sure it will take a while for people to read and process the totality of the article.

It might sound insane, but some of my other articles feel lazy to me after writing this one. I literally went through thousands of Castellammarese vital records, etc. page by page looking for names and connections to the 19th century guys. I wish I would have gone even deeper but had to call it good otherwise I'd never finish this and probably end up institutionalized.

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2 replies

Eric Stonefelt Apr 2 *Edited*

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I've made a PDF version of this "article" (book) available via Archive.org. It is just a crude archival PDF of this Substack page so it isn't pretty but should make reading / distribution more manageable as it is broken down by page and can be downloaded.

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3 replies by Eric Stonefelt and others

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